

Culture Action Europe

Activity Report 2025



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Table of Contents

2025 at a glance.....	3
Highlights of 2025.....	5
Towards the Culture Compass: Sector’s Blueprint.....	5
Central Beyond 2025: Being Many	7
Ask Pay Trust Campaign.....	10
Socially Engaged Arts	11
Mental Health Summit.....	12
Advocacy	13
Cultural Deal for Europe 2025	13
Culture Action Europe Action Groups	15
Consultations.....	15
Culture, (Mental) Health & Wellbeing	16
Network	18
Culture Action Europe Geographical Hubs and Satellite BEYOND structure ..	18
New members in 2025.....	20
Ongoing Projects.....	23
Closed projects.....	28

2025 at a glance

We look back on 2025 with a sense of gratitude, responsibility, and renewed conviction.

This year has reminded us that culture's strength lies not in standing apart from the challenges of our time, but in engaging with them directly. Across Europe, democratic values have continued to be tested, inequalities have deepened, conflicts have persisted, and the climate emergency has become ever more tangible. Yet amid uncertainty, we have also witnessed the extraordinary capacity of culture to bring people together, foster imagination, strengthen solidarity, and inspire action.

For Culture Action Europe, 2025 was a year of consolidation and growth. It was a year in which we deepened our role as a platform for collective advocacy, strengthened our network across Europe, and expanded our capacity to connect local realities with European policymaking. Most importantly, it was a year in which we worked alongside our members, partners, cultural practitioners, and communities to ensure that culture remains recognised as a fundamental pillar of democratic life.

The launch of our renewed BEYOND framework – with alternating years of centralised and decentralised meetings – , and the gathering of hundreds of cultural actors in Turin for [Central BEYOND 2025: Being Many](#), offered a powerful reflection on the kind of leadership our times require. Rather than seeking answers in individual authority, we explored the power of collective intelligence, shared responsibility, and cultural democracy. The question of how to be many—how to work together across generations, disciplines, geographies, and lived experiences—became a guiding thread throughout the year.

This spirit of collaboration also shaped our advocacy efforts. Through the [Ask, Pay, Trust](#) campaign, the [Cultural Deal for Europe](#), the development of the [Culture Compass Sector Blueprint](#), and our contributions to key European policy processes, we joined thousands of voices in making the case for culture as an essential public good. Together with our members and partners, we

demonstrated that investment in culture is an investment in democracy, well-being, resilience, and Europe's future.

At the same time, our work increasingly highlighted the connections between culture and other societal priorities. From [culture and health](#), to [socially engaged arts](#), [digital transformation](#), and [sustainability](#), we continued to advocate for culture not as a separate policy field, but as a vital force that helps societies navigate complexity and build more inclusive futures.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the trust, commitment, and creativity of our members. In 2025, our network grew more than at any point in the last four years, welcoming 85 new members and further strengthening the diversity and reach of our community. Through geographical hubs, action groups, projects, campaigns, and countless conversations, we saw once again that Culture Action Europe is defined by the collective energy of the people and organisations that shape it.

As you will discover throughout this report, 2025 was a year rich in activity, dialogue, and achievement. Yet, what makes us most proud is not the number of events organised, publications produced, or meetings held. It is the growing sense that, together, we are helping to build a stronger, more connected cultural ecosystem—one capable of advocating with authority, supporting others, and contributing meaningfully to Europe's future.

The challenges ahead remain significant. But if 2025 has taught us anything, it is that culture is at its strongest when it acts collectively. In a time that often encourages fragmentation, we choose cooperation. In a time of uncertainty, we choose solidarity. And in a time that demands new forms of leadership, we choose to be many.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this journey.

Highlights of 2025

Towards the Culture Compass: Sector's Blueprint



On 29 September 2025, Culture Action Europe published [Towards the Culture Compass: A Sector Blueprint](#), a collectively written discussion paper proposing a sector-led direction for the future of European cultural policy. Developed in anticipation of the European Commission's new Culture Compass, the Blueprint brought together around 30 cross-border European cultural networks, all members of CAE, in a shared advocacy process.

Through this collective work, members contributed knowledge, proposals and priorities across ten key areas and co-developed ten policy briefs on:

- [artistic freedom](#);
- [working conditions](#);
- [artistic research, culture and innovation](#);
- [international cultural relations](#);
- [culture and health and well-being](#);
- [culture and sustainability](#);
- [cultural participation](#);
- [access to cultural and arts education](#);
- [culture and security](#);
- [culture and digital](#).

The process was an important example of CAE's approach to advocacy: building common positions with members, strengthening the political voice of the sector, and turning diverse expertise from across Europe into a shared policy vision.

The publication of the Blueprint became a key moment in CAE's Ask, Pay, Trust campaign and helped shape the conversation around the Commission's Culture Compass. Many of the Blueprint's concerns and proposals were reflected in the [final Culture Compass](#), including stronger attention to cultural rights, artistic freedom, working conditions, structured dialogue, international cultural relations, digital policy and the role of culture across wider EU agendas.

On the day the Culture Compass was released, Commissioner Glenn Micallef met Culture Action Europe and the contributing networks in Brussels, where he handed the first printed copy of the document to the CAE community. This moment recognised the role of organised cultural civil society in shaping the future direction of EU cultural policy.

Central Beyond 2025: Being Many

BEYOND: Culture Action Europe's strategic framework for joint advocacy



BEYOND is Culture Action Europe's core strategic framework for reflection, active listening and joint advocacy across the cultural and creative sectors in Europe. It provides a space to explore bold, radical visions for the future while advancing core principles such as cultural democracy, ethical leadership, and cultural rights. BEYOND is designed to sustain a continuous and structured process of co-creation and consultation that both informs Culture Action Europe's advocacy work and strengthens the broader cultural ecosystem across Europe.

The BEYOND structure also serves as a two-way bridge between the cultural sector and policymakers. On one hand, it *encodes* the experiences, needs, and proposals of the cultural and creative sectors into CAE's advocacy at the European and national levels. It transforms distributed, localised knowledge into a coherent and collective voice. At the same time, it helps *decode* EU cultural policy developments and bring them to the field. Through BEYOND, Culture Action Europe makes complex institutional processes accessible, tangible and actionable for cultural actors on the ground.

The BEYOND structure is composed of two interlinked formats:

Central BEYOND is a biennial flagship gathering convened by Culture Action Europe and hosted by CAE organisational member(s)

Satellite BEYOND are a series of decentralised, regional events hosted by CAE members

Together, these two formats create a biennial cycle of engagement that alternates between centralised and decentralised modes of interaction. This cyclical structure ensures that CAE's work is both rooted in the lived realities of cultural practitioners and is responsive to evolving policy landscapes at the national and European levels.

This strategic interplay between central and satellite BEYONDS, reinforces Culture Action Europe's role as a connector and translator between grassroots cultural realities and institutional policymaking.

In 2025, Culture Action Europe, together with our members Club Silencio and Fondazione Fitzcarraldo co-hosted the first Central BEYOND from 4 to 7 June, in Turin, Italy.

BEYOND 2025: Being Many was a call to actionable hope in perilous times. Uncertainties shape our present and future, fueled by growing democratic erosion, shifting political landscapes, ongoing violent conflicts and the escalating climate emergency. We asked ourselves if in this context the cultural sector can take the lead in participatory governance and collective action? What does inclusive cultural leadership look like in our shared pursuit of resistance and transformation?

BEYOND 2025: Being Many invited us to rethink traditional notions of leadership and sought to uncover alternative, empathetic and sustainable practices that thrive in uncertainty. At its core, the gathering embraced intersectionality, intergenerational perspective and collective approaches. BEYOND 2025: Being Many explored diverse learning experiences, showcased bold and unconventional ways of governance and explored a possible paradigm for cultural democracy.

BEYOND 2025: Being Many embraced un-conferencing by nurturing a participatory environment that encouraged dialogue and collaboration. The program was a blend of keynotes and panel conversations with interactive workshops, capacity-building sessions, and site visits to local cultural initiatives. To break away from traditional conference formats, we tried to slow down the pace and allow for deeper reflection and meaningful exchanges. Networking opportunities were integrated throughout, creating informal spaces for connection and collaboration.

The gathering experience evolved around three key threads:

How to Be Many

Through project showcases, experience-sharing, workshops, and site visits, we explored how others embrace being many - whether by amplifying community voices, fostering intergenerational dialogue, creating space for collective creativity, rethinking governance models, enhancing sustainability, or driving joint advocacy.

The Joy of Being Many

These sessions were rooted in generosity, care, and trust. Through collective intelligence and intergenerational work, we fostered peer support, and strengthened connections and solidarity.

Harnessing Many Ideas

We created spaces dedicated to bold, unconventional thinking, featuring diverse formats to explore innovative ideas.

Relive the Central BEYOND 2025 Being Many in [Culture Action Europe's first ever collaborative Zine](#), as well as with recap [videos and beautiful pictures](#).

Ask Pay Trust Campaign

In 2025, the Ask, Pay, Trust Campaign guided CAE's advocacy as the next EU long-term budget, the future of Creative Europe programme, and the new EU Culture Compass moved onto the political agenda.

Campaign activity unfolded throughout the year. In March, CAE used the campaign to reframe EU priorities through culture. In June, more than 800 cultural sector professionals, representing 479 organisations from 40 countries, joined CAE's call for a strong, standalone Creative Europe programme and for culture to receive 2% of total EU spending. In July, CAE rapidly analysed the leaked draft of the next Creative Europe programme and responded to the Commission's proposal for the new [€8.6 billion AgoraEU programme](#), welcoming the visibility of a dedicated Creative Europe – Culture strand while calling for further ambition. In October, CAE published an Ask, Pay, Trust campaign roadmap and held public, online campaign meetings to support the sector's advocacy towards national ministers, MEPs and EU consultations.

One of the year's major achievements was the publication of [Towards the Culture Compass: A Sector Blueprint](#), launched publicly through an Ask, Pay, Trust campaign meeting. Developed with around 30 cross-border European cultural networks, the Blueprint brought together ten policy briefs and a shared sector vision for future cultural policies in Europe.

Following the European Commission's [adoption of the Culture Compass](#) for Europe in November, CAE brought the cultural sector into direct conversation with Commissioner Glenn Micallef during a civil society dialogue at LUCA School of Arts in Brussels, where he underlined the vital role of cultural civil society in the strategy's implementation.

CAE then carried the voices and priorities of the Sector Blueprint further through a [dedicated social media campaign](#), deepening advocacy around key topics such as artistic freedom, fair working conditions, and international cultural relations. Across online and in-person campaigning, Ask, Pay, Trust gathered 2,057 endorsements in 2025.

Socially Engaged Arts

Culture Action Europe holds that culture is a strategic force for navigating today's polycrisis, from the climate emergency and health challenges to social inequality, migration, and threats to democracy. Grounded in co-creation and participation, socially engaged arts are a practical expression of cultural democracy, reflecting their capacity to create participatory spaces for dialogue and social transformation, where communities actively shape creative processes to address pressing societal challenges.

Recognising their value as key assets for democratic resilience, Culture Action Europe has taken Socially Engaged Arts and Cultural Democracy as a focus of its advocacy work. This work is made possible with the close partnership with the [Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts](#): a collaborative fund of 13 philanthropic foundations hosted by the Network of European Foundations, dedicated to championing the power of socially engaged arts in driving positive social change across Europe.

Given Culture Action Europe's focus on advocacy, its role is to equip socially engaged arts practitioners with the skills and tools to strengthen their advocacy and engage more effectively with key policy stakeholders, while also ensuring that these practices are recognised and embedded in EU policy discussions at a time when the European Union is defining its strategic priorities for the 2028–2034 funding cycle, whose negotiations will shape the future resources available to the cultural sector.

Mental Health Summit



In May 2025, Culture Action Europe co-organised two panel discussions at the European Parliament in the context of the Mental Health Summit, together with MEP András Kulja, Member of the Committee on Public Health, and MEP Zoltán Tarr, Member of the Committee on Culture and Education, with the participation of Commissioner Glenn Micallef. The event brought together around 99 participants from the cultural, health and policy sectors. A dance artist invited MEPs and the audience to take part in a collective movement exercise, offering a direct experience of how artistic practice can contribute to wellbeing. During the evening reception on youth mental health, CAE also presented a youth theatre group, whose performance gave voice to young people's challenges and reflected on the supportive role that theatre can play in their lives.

[Read on a recap on developments in the field of Culture, Health and Well-being in 2025.](#)

Advocacy

Cultural Deal for Europe 2025



As part of the [Cultural Deal for Europe Campaign](#) – together with European Cultural Foundation and Europa Nostra (also as coordinator of the European Heritage Alliance), we continued advocating to put culture at the heart of the future of Europe.

The Cultural Deal for Europe calls on the EU to make culture a pillar of its internal strategy and external soft power ambitions, and to dedicate at least 2% of its future budget ([Multi-annual Financial Framework 2028-2034](#)) to culture. Europe's democracy, sustainability, security and competitiveness will largely depend on Europe's capacity to defend its values and freedoms in the physical and digital space, and to valorise and scale Europe's creative power.

The annual Cultural Deal for Europe policy conversation, that became a staple in the Brussels cultural calendar, also was organized on 4 February in 2025. The event brought together Commissioner for Culture Glenn Micallef and the European Commission officials, five Members of the European Parliament, including the CULT Committee Chair Nela Riehl, the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, cultural attachés from EU Member States, and representatives

of European cultural networks and organisations—altogether 120 participants engaged on spot and 1000 online.

Through four panels and four on-stage interviews, the following messages emerged:

- Culture’s recognition should reach beyond the cultural sector and be hardwired into the Commission’s flagship policies—from the new Competitiveness Fund and security and preparedness agenda to research, skills development, and AI regulation.
- Culture is where democracy is attacked first—so it must be where the EU’s resistance begins. That means keeping the cultural ecosystem sustainable: trusting and paying artists, ensuring autonomy of cultural organisations, empowering civil society, supporting grassroots cultural projects, investing in cultural infrastructure, and embedding Artistic Freedom in the Rule of Law Report.
- European institutions must learn from Eastern Europe’s cultural resilience (Ukraine, Georgia, and Serbia). The EU should support candidate states and neighbouring countries fighting for European values by strengthening Georgia’s and Serbia’s civil society and allocating 2% of frozen Russian assets to Ukraine’s cultural recovery.
- The Culture Compass should guarantee a strong, well-funded Creative Europe programme to support European artists and cultural content. While providing a unifying strategic framework, the Compass should preserve the cultural component in other policy areas, as it strengthens the sector’s open and co-creative nature.
- Embrace the real power of culture. It is neither an asset, nor a luxury, nor a duty. Culture defies immediate utility and purpose; it is an act of freedom and, in that, the essence of Europe itself.

Read more detailed analysis of the event in our blogpost [here](#).

Culture Action Europe Action Groups

Action groups played a prominent role in shaping the advocacy activities of Culture Action Europe in the 2025 calendar year. Some action groups built upon their work from 2024, while new action groups were announced to shape some of the flagship actions unveiled in the Culture Compass for Europe by the European Commission in November 2025.

The [Digital & AI Action Group](#) built upon its [Mission Statement](#) established in 2024 and considerations shared on the [EU Artificial Intelligence Act](#) through continuing discussions and debate on AI policy for the cultural and creative sectors. Initial discussions were held at the end of 2025 on the Code of Practice on AI Transparency Obligations currently being developed by the European Commission, but the focus of the group has been placed on the upcoming AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors. The Strategy is expected from the European Commission in the spring of 2027 and the action group will launch a series of meetings with members to gain feedback and co-create recommendations to share with the European Commission by the summer of 2026 to influence the upcoming strategy.

Consultations

In 2025, Culture Action Europe contributed to a wide range of official stakeholder consultations on EU cultural policy and related policy areas. Alongside these formal contributions, CAE maintained an ongoing in-person dialogue with Commissioner Glenn Micallef and his Cabinet, DG EAC, and several Members of the European Parliament, including members of the CULT Committee and other relevant committees.

Culture Action Europe also submitted positions to several calls for evidence through the European Commission's Have Your Say consultation process, feeding the perspective of the cultural sector into the development of new EU policies and legislation. These contributions helped ensure that the needs, priorities and expertise of cultural civil society were reflected in wider European policy discussions.

1. [Digital Innovation Act](#). (October 2025). The contribution stressed the need for the Act to recognise the vital role of CCS in digital innovation, to support culture as a strategic priority of the Act, to prioritise artistic freedom and fair remuneration for artists, to embrace STEAM approaches and arts education, and to recognise artistic research as part of the innovation ecosystem.
2. [Code of Practice on AI Transparency Obligations](#) – First Draft. (November 2025). Culture Action Europe participated in two European Commission action groups on the development of a Code of Practice on AI Transparency Obligations, building upon Article 50 of the AI Act. The aural and written input was taken on board as part of the development of the first draft released at the end of 2025.
3. [Digital Omnibus Package](#). (November 2025). The contribution stressed the need to protect creators’ rights in the age of generative AI, to take advantage of the strategy enable cultural agency in data and digital governance, and to support European cultural data spaces.
4. [Intergenerational Fairness Strategy](#). (November 2025). The contribution submitted emphasised the importance of mainstreaming culture into the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy across its actions, supporting cultural participation for all, embracing cultural democracy, and promoting culture, health and well-being.

Culture, (Mental) Health & Wellbeing

The advocacy work in the Culture, Health & Wellbeing field contributed to concrete progress in several key EU policy documents, helping to bring culture and mental health closer together at European level. With the support of the European Cultural Foundation, Culture Action Europe’s advocacy helped ensure that the role of cultural participation, creative expression and cultural actors was more clearly reflected in EU discussions and strategies on mental health.

1. The European Commission’s “Culture Compass For Europe” – the new EU cultural strategy has a subtitle on “Enhancing health and well-being through culture”. The document refers to the OMC report in Culture and

Health and foresees an action in 2028: develop “EU guidelines on culture, health and well-being for policy makers and stakeholders”

2. In September 2025, the Open Method of Coordination on Culture and Health EU member states group, published the [Culture and Health: Time to Act](#) outlining how the culture and health sectors should work together. The document offers a list of clear policy recommendations for the years to come. Culture Action Europe continues active engagement work to make sure that this EU document is being followed up on Member States level, with several concrete steps already taken in Spain, Ireland, Belgium (Flanders), Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, and Slovenia.
3. Published in June 2025, the EU Council conclusions on “Promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era” states that “socialising with peers, cultural participation, creative activities, (...) have a positive impact on (...) adolescents’ mental health”.
4. The four-year [Culture and Health Platform](#), together with the [CARE project](#), continued to support CAE’s advocacy by strengthening understanding of artists’ and cultural practitioners’ needs in this field and raising awareness of the precarious working conditions in which many operate. Through online events, peer-learning and training activities, these initiatives helped connect practice-based knowledge with policy discussions, encouraging policymakers to consider more structural responses in line with the recommendations of [Culture and Health: Time to Act](#).

Network

Culture Action Europe Geographical Hubs and Satellite BEYOND structure

In 2025, Culture Action Europe further developed its decentralised model of collaboration through the strengthening of its Geographical Hubs and the launch of the Satellite BEYOND format. As CAE transitions to a biennial cycle for its central BEYOND conference, with the next edition planned for 2027, hubs and satellites have become key structures for regional engagement, peer exchange and advocacy across Europe.

CAE's Geographical Hubs are member-led regional networks designed to strengthen connections between local cultural realities and European cultural policy discussions. The hubs provide spaces for exchange, advocacy coordination, capacity-building and collaborative action among members working in shared geographical or linguistic contexts.

In 2025, nine active hubs were operating across Europe:

- **Spain Hub** focused on advocacy, funding collaboration and strengthening links between local cultural realities and European debates. The hub organised regular meetings and working groups, published a multilingual manifesto and explored the creation of a future Iberian Hub together with Portugal.
- **UK Hub** continued to consolidate following its creation in Malmö in 2024, facilitating discussions around post-Brexit cultural relations, European collaboration and youth engagement, while encouraging greater participation of UK organisations within CAE.
- **Nordic Hub** developed a capacity-building programme centred on advocacy, public funding and cultural leadership, supported through Nordic Culture Point funding. Activities included online exchanges, public discussions and the development of a future "School of Advocacy".

- **French Hub (France, Belgium and Switzerland)** expanded its advocacy work through engagement with policymakers and Members of the European Parliament, while strengthening cooperation among French-speaking CAE members and European networks.
- **Poland Hub** prioritised work on culture for health, democracy and accessibility, while contributing collectively to national cultural policy consultations and qualification frameworks for the cultural sector.
- **Dutch Hub** focused on connecting national and European cultural policy discussions, supporting CAE advocacy campaigns and engaging with policymakers despite increasingly challenging political conditions.
- **German-speaking Hub (Germany, Austria and Switzerland)** reactivated its DACH network through online policy-focused exchanges on topics including the Cultural Compass, the Multiannual Financial Framework and Switzerland's association with European programmes.
- **Italy Hub** concentrated its efforts on hosting the 2025 Members' Forum and BEYOND gathering in Turin.

Alongside the hub structure, CAE introduced the new **Satellite BEYOND** format as part of its decentralised engagement strategy. Six regional satellite gatherings per year are planned between September 2025 and September 2026, organised in collaboration with CAE members and local partners across Europe. The satellites aim to increase accessibility, strengthen regional participation and address local cultural challenges within a European framework.

Satellite events are designed as flexible, locally hosted gatherings that may be connected to existing events and rotate between countries within each region. CAE provides methodological, communication and content support, as well as seed funding, while local organisers are responsible for logistics and additional fundraising.

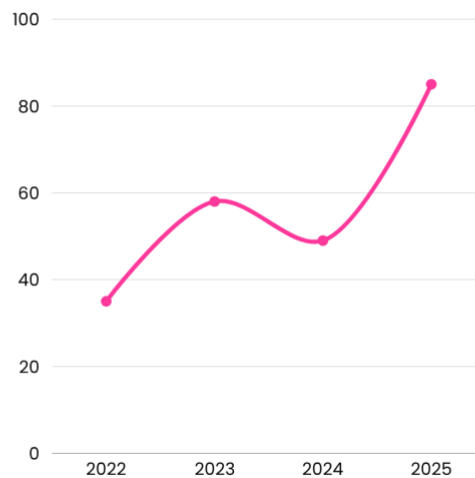
An open call for hosting Satellite BEYOND gatherings was launched in 2025, inviting CAE members and partners to propose and co-host regional events. The format encourages participatory and experimental methodologies, including unconferences, open discussions and creative collaborative approaches, while ensuring the involvement of diverse cultural stakeholders, policymakers and project representatives.

New members in 2025

85 new members joined Culture Action Europe in 2025, out of which:

- 4 transnational cultural networks
- 7 national associations or networks
- 41 non-membership organisations
- 29 individual members
- 2 associated members
- 2 supporting members

2025 marked the highest annual membership growth for CAE in the past four years.



Knowledge Sharing with Our Members: Brussels Decoder, State of Culture Webinars, ASK PAY TRUST Campaign Meetings and More

Culture Action Europe is committed to keeping its members informed, connected and engaged by providing timely insights into the evolving European cultural policy landscape.

A key tool in this effort is the [Brussels Decoder](#), a members-only monthly publication that explains the latest developments in EU cultural policy directly from Brussels. In 2025, CAE published 10 editions, offering analysis and updates to support members in navigating the European policy environment.

Complementing this, [Culture Action Europe Headlines](#) provides a curated monthly overview of key news and developments in cultural policy, research, cultural management and artistic practice across Europe. The digest includes updates from Brussels, highlights from CAE members, as well as relevant opportunities and sector research. In 2025, 11 editions were shared with members.

Following the publication of the *State of Culture Report* in 2024, CAE launched a series of thematic webinars to explore its key chapters in greater depth. These sessions created space for dialogue, reflection and exchange on the main issues raised in the report. Each webinar focused on a specific theme, helping to translate the report's findings into ongoing discussion and practice within the network.

The webinar series also served as a lead-up to CAE's flagship event, **BEYOND 2025**, which was structured around the core themes of the *State of Culture*, ensuring that the most relevant issues for the community were brought to the forefront. Out of 7 State of Culture webinars, 5 took place in 2025. See more [here](#).

In addition, as part of the ongoing [ASK, PAY, TRUST](#) campaign, CAE organised three online campaign meetings in 2025. These sessions provided members

with updates on key developments in EU cultural policy, including discussions on the Culture Compass and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

We also continue to strengthen the visibility of our members' work. CAE monthly lunchtime sessions are designed to spotlight the activities of our community, offering members a space to share their initiatives, increase their visibility, and connect with fellow members across the network. These sessions are open to all members, who are warmly encouraged to take the opportunity to present their work and engage with peers in an informal and supportive setting.

Together, these communication and learning activities strengthen an informed and connected membership, fostering exchange, collaboration and active participation in shaping the future of culture in Europe.

Ongoing Projects

Culture & Health Platform

Led by Culture Action Europe, the CultureAndHealth Platform is a four-year transformative initiative designed to support over 200 European emerging artists working at the intersection of culture, health, care, education, and social sectors.

By providing grants, mobility and networking opportunities, and visibility of their work, the initiative aims to highlight the vital role of culture in fostering health, well-being, and social innovation across Europe.

With EU co-funding and the excellent joint work of 17 organisations consisting of the platform, in the first year of the project 56 emerging artists were supported to implement their projects in the area of culture health and wellbeing. This happened through 11 calls for artists' project proposals in Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden. Additionally, 18 artists are receiving long-term capacity building through our Artistic Exploration Lab "Shaping collective spaces and exploring boundaries"-delivered by Red Noses International.

In the "Culture and Health Forum" in Turku, Finland over 180 people gathered from 21 countries. Participants explored how arts and culture can play a transformative role in improving health and wellbeing and foster social cohesion.

The platform offered numerous capacity building activities to the artists working in the field through a 2-day international in-person training and 18 'free for all' online trainings were organised in 4 languages (English, German, French, Romanian). Associazione Oltre and Kunstloc Brabant organised 2 cross-border peer-to-peer learning and networking possibilities, that we call "artist shadowing", where artists can travel to another country to learn from more experienced artists. Wea also organised 8 artists' roundtables – enabling peer-to-peer, artist-to-artist learning as well as networking.

All in all, over 1000 artists received financial support, training or showcasing possibility through the first year of the CultureAndHealth Platform.

CARE: Culture for Mental Health

The CARE project's goal is to mobilise the potential of arts and cultural experiences to enhance mental health and well-being of youth, people in their working age and people with disabilities. In 2025 CAE organised 3 online events corresponding to these topics with 180 registrations together. Stakeholders from culture, health, education and business collaborated to create innovative approaches proposing individual and structural solutions to increase health and well-being through access and participation in culture across Europe.

Led by Cluj Cultural Centre and supported by the EU, the project is organising six Culture and Mental Health mobile hubs, a travelling festival-like event across European cities, out of which two took place in 2025: in Cluj and in Ljubljana. The events boosted awareness and promoted cross-sector exchange in the area of culture and mental health. Through advocacy actions, the project also ensured that policy recommendations were brought to local, national and EU decision-makers. Culture Action Europe is responsible for driving this policy change within the project.

Training for the Contact Zone (TCZ) project

Training for the Contact Zone (TCZ) is an Erasmus+ Adult Education project focused on developing a training framework for cultural practitioners working on memory, identity, contested heritage, dialogue, and cultural democracy. The project brings together seven partner contexts across Europe and combines curriculum development, toolkit production, trainings, and dissemination activities to support participatory and reflective cultural practice.

In 2025, the project moved from framework design into implementation. During consortium meetings in Porto and Chania, partners further developed the TCZ curriculum and toolkit, including practical approaches for digital participation, intersectionality, and reflective practice. Culture Action Europe (CAE) contributed throughout this phase as a consortium partner, with particular input on methodological coherence and the development of the evaluation methodologies chapter.

The implementation phase also included three pilot trainings in Amsterdam, Bucharest, and Vitoria-Gasteiz, addressing respectively colonial histories and

heritage, Roma history and cultural mediation, and memory, conflict, and diversity in the Basque context. CAE supported the partners implementing the trainings by contributing to their visibility, communication, and the wider dissemination of project activities and outcomes. CAE also contributed to the preparation of the interim dissemination conference, held in Bucharest in December 2025 and hosted by Goethe-Institut Bucharest. CAE was involved throughout the process, supporting the development of the programme content as well as the visibility, communication, and dissemination of the event and its outcomes.

Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship

In January 2025, the [Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts](#) – a Europe-wide initiative supported by 11 European philanthropic foundations – launched its first pilot fellowship programme dedicated to supporting leaders working in the field of socially engaged arts.

The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship is designed to connect and support visionary leaders of arts organisations committed to community engagement and social change across Europe. The programme provides a collaborative space for participants to strengthen their organisations, advance their professional development and contribute to advocacy efforts within the cultural sector.

The first cohort brings together 15 leaders working across a wide range of artistic disciplines and social issues. Through the fellowship, participants collaborate to address shared challenges, exchange experiences and develop innovative approaches that create greater impact within their local communities and the wider European arts sector. [Meet the fellows.](#)

In partnership with two Culture Action Europe members – [The Audience Agency \(UK\)](#) and [Fondazione Fitzcarraldo \(IT\)](#) – CAE is contributing to the delivery of the fellowship programme for the cohort of selected fellows. CAE's role within the curriculum focuses specifically on advocacy and strengthening participants' capacity to engage with cultural policy and systemic change.

Advocacy with and for Socially Engaged Arts

To reinforce the fellowship's mission and scale the potential of socially engaged arts, Culture Action Europe has positioned this field as a central strand of its advocacy work by developing a partnership with the [Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts](#) with the aim of bringing these practices into key debates on arts policy and funding, while emphasising their role in advancing cultural democracy.

The partnership, running from September 2025 to December 2026, has been strategically timed to align with the European Union's process of setting its priorities for the 2028–2034 funding cycle, which will determine future cultural investment and programme support.

In practice, the collaboration highlights the transformative impact of socially engaged arts by enabling practitioners and organisations to engage with policymakers and key stakeholders, while raising awareness within the policy landscape. This has been realised through the holistic integration of socially engaged arts and cultural democracy within the [Compass Blueprint](#), alongside their consistent foregrounding in CAE's flagship advocacy campaign '[Ask, Pay, Trust](#)'.

EMCCINNO - Empowering Community-based Cultural and Creative Industries for Innovation

EMCCINNO – Empowering Community-based Cultural and Creative Industries for Innovation – is a Horizon Europe project exploring how culture can drive social and ecological transition. Working through five transformation sites in Marseille, Vejer de la Frontera, Coimbra, Budapest and Berlin, the project supports community-based cultural and creative initiatives to test new ways of working through collaborative experiments, artistic interventions and local prototypes. By connecting cultural organisations, artists, researchers, communities, public authorities and European networks, EMCCINNO aims to strengthen the capacity of cultural and creative actors to contribute to more just and sustainable futures.

In 2025, the project moved from its launch phase into active collaboration and experimentation. EMCCINNO officially launched in Marseille in February, bringing

all partners together for shared planning, exchange and the development of the project's first methods and prototypes. During the year, Culture Action Europe supported the project as its main cultural community partner, helping connect EMCCINNO to wider European cultural debates, including through BEYOND 2025 in Turin. The project also began to make its work visible through public reflections and pilot stories, contributed to discussions on culture, climate transition and social enterprise, and launched the Community of Practice for Culture & Climate as an open space for peer learning, exchange and collective reflection. The year closed with a second international gathering in Budapest, where partners reviewed progress across the five transformation sites, shared methods and prepared the next phase of local experimentation, study visits and policy learning.

Shift Culture-ECO Certification

2025 marked Culture Action Europe's third year of participation in the SHIFT Culture eco-certification framework. As part of the certification cycle, CAE underwent a peer-audit process while also preparing the integration of new sustainability criteria within the forthcoming certification framework. To proactively address these developments, CAE dedicated a part of its fall staff retreat to an in-depth reflection on climate justice, examining how environmental responsibility, equity, and systemic sustainability can be more effectively embedded across the organisation's strategic priorities and operational practices. In parallel, CAE advanced a significant structural shift in its events model by transitioning its flagship annual conference towards a biennial format, complemented in alternate years by a series of smaller, regionally focused satellite events. This decentralised approach also aims to reduce the environmental impact associated with large-scale international gatherings while strengthening regional participation, supporting place-based knowledge exchange, and fostering the inclusion of diverse local perspectives in European cultural policy discussions.

Closed projects

Advocating for the Inclusion of Culture in Mental Health Policies

With the support of the European Cultural Foundation, Culture Action Europe advanced its advocacy for the inclusion of culture in mental health policies, helping to strengthen the link between culture, care, wellbeing and democratic resilience at European level. The project contributed to key policy developments, including references to cultural participation and creative activities in the EU Council conclusions on children and adolescents' mental health in the digital era, the inclusion of health and wellbeing in the European Commission's Culture Compass for Europe, and the publication of the OMC report *Culture and Health: Time to Act*, to which CAE contributed as an invited expert.

The project also created concrete spaces for exchange between cultural, health and policy actors. CAE organised and contributed to discussions at the European Parliament, BEYOND 2025 in Turin, and the European Regional Health Authorities Annual Conference, bringing evidence, artistic practice and lived experience into policy conversations on mental health. More than ten artists and practitioners were supported through mobility grants and capacity-building opportunities in Turku and the Netherlands, strengthening their role as changemakers in the field of culture, health and wellbeing. While the project has formally closed, its results continue to inform CAE's wider advocacy on culture, care, health, social cohesion and resilience.

We take care of the cultural ecosystem



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