

EUNIC Focal Points Meeting Report

15 & 16 May 2023
Vilnius, Lithuania

Co-organised with Lithuanian Culture Institute



Key topics discussed

- [Updates on EUNIC advocacy, European Spaces of Culture & the EUNIC Mobility Scheme](#)
- [Support to Belarusian cultural actors in exile](#)
- [New EUNIC Ukraine support fund](#)
- [Climate Culture\(s\) Creative Lab – EUNIC shared project in Berlin](#)
- [EUNIC cluster network: challenges & next steps](#)
- [Training models for cultural relations staff](#)
- [Regional cluster seminars, new cluster applications & next EUNIC Cluster Fund Call](#)
- [EUNIC General Assembly in Copenhagen in June 2023 & upcoming Knowledge Sharing Workshops](#)



1. EUNIC updates

EUNIC advocacy

EU regional funds for culture

During the EUNIC regional seminar for Sub-Saharan Africa in Kenya, EUNIC members and clusters from across the region took part in active discussions with DG INTPA and several EU Delegations to share a practitioner perspective from the region and feedback to DG INTPA's working note on the outline for the new EU Culture funding programme in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to the seminar all EUNIC members headquarters were also given the opportunity to send feedback. In the coming months, as the programme is finalised and launched, there will be opportunities for EUNIC members to provide input, such as a sharing of the outcomes and lessons learnt of the ACP-EU Culture programmes co-led by EUNIC members in West, Southern and East Africa.

Furthermore, EUNIC continues to support DG NEAR in its programming planning for culture in both Eastern Partnerships and Southern Neighbourhood countries. EUNIC welcomes any members especially active and interested in these regions to contact the office to be updated of developments. Following interest of several EUNIC members and clusters to work more closely with the Western Balkans, follow-up will also be held with DG NEAR to continue discussions.

One important topic for the network will be to refresh, reimagine and strengthen how our members can work together in consortia on (large scale) EU contracts to ensure a European dimension. The role of our Focal Points and linking in members' headquarters will be vital in this.

Multilateral fora and intra-regional political meetings

EUNIC has been active in consultations regarding the cultural dimension to the upcoming EU-CELAC summit in July. Positioning policy outcomes and dialogue emerging from cultural relations is the longer-term aspiration for such summits (including also ASEM, African Union, etc).

New EU expert group on the governance of international cultural relations

As indicated in the new Council Work Plan, an Open Method of Coordination group will be convened on the topic of the governance of cultural relations at EU level. EUNIC informed all members of the deadline the EU has set for proposals for experts from each EU Member State and encouraged EUNIC members to engage with this invitation; and for non-ministry members of EUNIC to contact the relevant ministries to support with their expertise in the field.

Ukraine updates

Following the unanimous approval of the Ukrainian Institute as a new Associate Member of EUNIC at the global level, EUNIC is delighted to welcome Svitlana Lenchenko as the newly appointed Focal Point for EUNIC at the Ukrainian Institute.

A second call of the EUNIC Ukraine joint fund, in partnership with the European Cultural Foundation, has been launched to promote the visibility and embeddedness of Ukrainian culture in other European countries. This second [EUNIC-Ukraine call is open from 17 May until 5 September](#). Members are still invited to make additional financial contributions to the fund if possible.

The second contract of House of Europe Ukraine (funded with 5 million euros) has now begun. Attention is needed to re-dynamise the EUNIC Ukraine cluster.



After consultation with the Ukrainian Institute a briefing note has been sent to all clusters advising on approaches to Ukrainian representation.

European Spaces of Culture

A brief update was presented of [European Spaces of Culture](#), currently in its final year as Preparatory Action (2019-2023). Over the last years, the project has tested across the globe collaboration models and partnerships between local EUNIC members, their local (cultural) partners and EU Delegations by supporting 25 pilot projects. The Preparatory Action has been recognized repeatedly as **one of the main strategic actions to advance the EU's approach to international cultural relations**, such as in MEP Salima Yenbou's [Report on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations](#). It was therefore highlighted that given the strategic importance of the project, it is crucial that EUNIC partners remain committed and participating in the pilot projects, whereas the reality at times is that this commitment not always lasts during project implementation. Headquarters were called upon to, together with the EUNIC team, keep their networks engaged.

From the last round of [pilot projects](#), the projects in Kenya, Angola, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Colombia, and Palestine were highlighted to demonstrate **the wide range of topics addressed and approaches taken** with these projects. Besides supporting these projects, the Spaces team at EUNIC has been supporting applicants to the various Calls for Ideas, developing community with those teams participating and guiding in communication and evaluation strategies. A new contract with the European Commission (DG Education and Culture) is foreseen for the next two years. The EUNIC team will design a new proposal over the next few months and will re-examine some of the parameters of the projects in its current shape, including content focus such as **alignment with the UN SDGs and cultural relations in fragile contexts**.

EUNIC Mobility Scheme

The EUNIC Mobility Scheme of 2022-2023 has received overall positive feedback from both participants and hosting institutions. In 18 hosting offers taking place, colleagues working for a EUNIC member organization had the chance to exchange and share knowledge with their hosting institution and with each other on strategically important topics for EUNIC such as Fair Collaboration, language learning, digitalisation, human rights, youth engagement, diversity and inclusion, SDGs, and sustainability. The hosting offers provided rich programmes that gave participants the opportunity to get to know in detail different ways of working. Overall, there was a good engagement on social media from the hosting institutions and (in fewer cases) from the participants.

For the next round of hosting offers in 2023-2024 EUNIC has published 14 hosting offers, including headquarters, clusters, and country offices. In a series of preparatory webinars aimed at participants and hosts, EUNIC will address some of the points that can be improved, such as more attention to the local context in the hosting offer programmes, an increased two-way exchange between hosts and participants and more engagement with the structures of EUNIC and how EUNIC works with the EU institutions. Looking at the hosting offers ahead there is good engagement with topics relevant for EUNIC's recent work, such as Fair Collaboration and Research & Insights. Another positive note is an increased attention to accessibility by hosting offers and potentially accommodating participants to make their visit possible. [The call for participants has been published on the EUNIC website and social media and will close on 1 July](#). Visits are expected to take place between August 2023 and June 2024.



Cluster updates

The latest EUNIC regional seminar took place in **February 2023 for clusters in Sub-Saharan Africa in Nairobi, Kenya**. The seminar brought together representatives from 13 out of the 16 clusters in the region and involved regional specialists from EUNIC members' headquarters, academics with expertise in the field of cultural relations, representatives from the European Commission – DG International Partnerships and four EU Delegations in the region – and key Kenyan cultural stakeholders. The seminar provided an important opportunity to discuss the upcoming EU programme for Sub-Saharan Africa dedicated to culture and to strengthen ties both between the clusters and with the diverse stakeholders in the region. The report of the seminar can be found online [here](#).

The next regional seminar will be organised in **autumn 2023 for EUNIC clusters in the Asia-Pacific region**, most likely in Hanoi, Vietnam. Colleagues will be informed once exact dates and times are confirmed. All EUNIC members, especially those with little to no representation in clusters in this region, are invited to share any specific thoughts and input they have regarding relevant contacts or projects topics to feed the content and programme of the next seminar.

EUNIC received **two new cluster applications from Indonesia and Ivory Coast to be approved by the General Assembly in Copenhagen**. Positive trends can be observed in both locations: colleagues seem to work collaboratively in a good dynamic on the basis of a shared understanding of cultural relations and have already established contact with the local EU Delegation. Several consultation calls with the EUNIC office have taken place throughout the process of strategy development. Colleagues from both locations are currently finalising their strategies and application form, all documents will be shared with EUNIC Heads and Focal Points ahead of the GA. An overview of applying member organisations and main strategy points can be found in the PowerPoint presentation on p. 25.

There might be a **cluster application from Uganda** before the end of the year for approval at the GA in December 2023. Currently at this early stage only Alliance Française, British Council and Goethe-Zentrum are involved, at least one other member would be needed. **Headquarters are invited to get in touch with their representations in Uganda** to get involved in the creation process.

2. Panel discussion – Support to Belarusian cultural actors in exile

Several experts from Belarus and Lithuania joined the meeting to discuss the context, needs and approaches to supporting Belarusian cultural actors in exile, both in Lithuania and in other parts of the EU.

Vytis Jurkonis (Freedom House), expert on Belarus and Eastern Partnership, presented reasons for more intensified and closer collaboration on Belarus in Lithuania, such as geographical proximity and cultural and historical ties. Since the last decade, a high number of Belarusian organisations and NGOs (particularly working on topics of inclusion and LGBTIQ+, as well as the leader of the opposition) have relocated to Lithuania. The current political climate is favourable, with the Lithuanian authorities willing to actively support the Belarusian community also by issuing a simplified residence permit (widely and easily obtained by the Belarusian diaspora). After the Ukrainian diaspora, the Belarusian diaspora is the second largest in Lithuania, counting over 40,000. There is also a number of Russians fleeing the war.

The big influx started in 2020, when post-election protests over time became tinted with narratives of national revival and identity related issues: Belarusian identity, language, culture, and minorities. It includes diverse profiles: people from the opposition, human rights defenders,



businessmen, many journalists, cultural operators (singers, writers, visual artists, curators) as well as their family members, initially planning a short-term relocation. Now with a more long-term perspective, most of the diaspora has been trying to integrate the labour market, also contributing significantly to the economy through taxes of displaced Belarusian businesses in Lithuania.

Current challenges include:

- Human rights defenders' puzzle: the efforts to help to relocate the diaspora are also causing a huge brain-drain in the country. The inability to go back to Belarus also creates a mental wall. On one hand the diaspora is trying to establish their lives in Lithuania and on the other hand they are trying to continue to support the work of those left in Belarus, which is risky and might put people in danger. There are more than 1,500 political prisoners in Belarus.
- Visa support is needed not only for those who want to establish their lives in Lithuania, but also for those seeking mobility across Europe. There is no homogeneous visa policy across the EU Member States, instead there are many different requirements and conditions.

Belarusian curator and writer **Aleksei Borisionok** presented several initiatives and co-creations involving and supporting Belarusian artists across Europe, such as the [Antiwar Coalition](#) – a collection of visual art on how to construct spaces of solidarity. Aleksei gave a critical analysis of the type of support currently available and needed for Belarusian artists:

- Invisibility of artistic and cultural practices in Belarus, as well as of Belarusian artists in Europe.
- In Belarus there is no funding and access to artistic and curatorial education for Belarusian professionals, there is a strong need for scholarships across the EU.
- After 2020 there has been a flurry of opportunities. But since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the focus has shifted and there is remarkably less support for Belarusian artists.
- Visibility of opportunities is quite limited and often goes to the same and limited group. It is important to create opportunities for self-education, public presentation, and networking opportunities for artists from different regions.
- Funding from EU Member States should focus on supporting critical independent artistic practice, which is important as many artists in Belarus do not have the funding and possibilities to develop research (due to a lack of structural funding).
- Work commissions are crucial, but sometimes the requirements are also challenging. It is interesting to see how invitations are applied. The mechanisms around commissions need to be improved.
- Residency programmes are also important to support the development of artistic research.
- Access to visas is a challenge as some criteria are quite specific. It is sometimes more difficult for artists to prove that they need a humanitarian visa. Policies are different for Belarusian and Russian artists (easier for the latter to get visas in some EU Member States).
- Often Belarus and Russia are put into one bag, which is problematic. The context and needs are different. However, collaborations with Russian artists are also important, particularly with those vocal against Russian imperialists and the current regime.
- It is important to support long-term collaboration and artistic practices, rather than one-time large showcase events.
- It is important to support not only national representations, but also other more progressive topics, such as LGBTQI+, post-colonial, feminist, and queer voices.

The **Belarusian Council for Culture**, like many organizations, has been labelled by the Belarusian government as an extremist organisation. Its focus is to promote Belarusian culture internationally. As a result of advocacy, it is now in charge of the ArtPower programme, supported with more than 1 million euros by DG NEAR of the European Commission. The programme is focusing on



subgranting, and it has seen so far a very high demand and response to open calls. Most of the applicants are cultural figures who have relocated from Belarus.

Another important priority of the Council is to boost skills and support creation of professional cultural networks which is done through an annual international conference on the role of culture in Belarusian society, sectoral roundtable discussions, the production of regular analytical reports, and the development of a web-based communication space.

3. Climate Culture(s) Creative Lab – EUNIC Shared Project

As presented at the last General Assembly, a EUNIC shared project on the topic of culture, the environment and the climate crisis is currently implemented as part of the Goethe-Institut's presidency of EUNIC in 2022-2023. The 'Climate Culture(s) Creative Lab' will **bring together 35 colleagues from 23 different EUNIC member headquarters as well as local branches worldwide for a week-long training in Berlin from 23-28 June 2023.**

The programme in Berlin is structured around three strands:

1. Knowledge sharing on the topic of culture and climate in collaboration with [Julie's Bicycle](#), leading sessions on climate literacy, creative climate movements, and creative climate justice.
2. Taking in the German and Berlin context by visiting local initiatives active in the fields of sustainability, culture, climate, and the environment
3. Participants will be producing different outputs during this week, basing their work on their own expertise, and focusing on relevant questions in smaller working groups. This output-driven and solutions-oriented process will be accompanied by [Social Impact](#).

With a considerable part of the upcoming General Assembly being dedicated to this project, the content of presentations in Copenhagen will depend on the work and concrete output created during the week in Berlin. A delegation of six selected participants will directly travel from Berlin to Copenhagen to be present at the GA and share the voices and ideas of the entire group.

The week itself will be organized as environmentally friendly as possible. Challenges will be communicated to participants in a transparent way in order to raise awareness about practical struggles. The entire project is planned as a co-creative and collaborative process: participants are actively working on the programme which also allows them to raise and map the most relevant topics in this context for each member. In line with this, participants with expertise in multimedia creation have been invited to create a visual output of the meeting.

EUNIC has received diverse and overall very positive feedback from participants so far. Although often not used to such an approach, participants find the interactive and collaborative nature of the project exciting and motivating. It has been noted that the context in which EUNIC operates and its overall mission, aim, and concrete projects need to be made clearer for participants.

A thinking group consisting of four EUNIC Focal Points¹ was established at the beginning of the ideation process for the project. The expertise of this advisory group has been and continues to be highly valuable in the creation of the programme, and they will be involved in the next steps.

¹ From Czech Centres, Danish Cultural Institute, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and DutchCulture.



4. EUNIC cluster network: Group discussions on next steps

EUNIC celebrated the tenth anniversary of the EUNIC Cluster Fund in 2022. To further drive the professionalisation of the network and to explore ways of improving and using this strategic internal funding mechanism in the future, a [research on the development of the cluster network](#) was commissioned. Based on extensive desk research, a series of qualitative interviews with selected EUNIC clusters and a vast online survey, this research explored the evolution from cultural diplomacy initiatives to approaches in line with a cultural relations approach, factors strengthening or challenging the effective cluster management and cooperation amongst EUNIC cluster members and the impact of implementing a Cluster Fund project on a cluster. The research has been a starting point for further reflections on how to address recurring challenges and unfold untapped potential in the cluster network.

After the cluster team contextualised common challenges being faced by the cluster network, members were invited to reflect on possible solutions to some of these challenges in smaller groups. The groups were identified along three main areas where the network could collectively make a real difference and improve the framework for colleagues working in clusters. Based on the discussions in groups, the goal of this exercise is to create a roadmap on how to tackle these challenges. This will be presented at the next General Assembly to be discussed and decided by the Heads.

1) Expectations and terms of references for clusters

Challenges identified:

- General growth of the network
- Varied membership: different understanding of the cultural relations approach and EUNIC's mission
- Lowest common denominator of traditional projects vs. cultural relations projects
- Competing priorities for colleagues (bilateral vs. multilateral initiatives)
- Need to streamline understanding of aim of and expectations from clusters
- Varied degrees of activity vs. inactivity (problem of dormant clusters)
- Future direction of the cluster network and the Cluster Fund
- How to support our network in the EU?

Members agreed that **strategic topics need to be delivered across the network** in order to make the work globally relevant and to unite the network's different areas of work under content-led activities. These as well as shared EUNIC values can be proposed in a more prescriptive way and should be explicit and clear. An example of this is the selection criteria and optional thematic focus in the yearly Cluster Fund Call for Proposals. However, **local contexts and needs always need to be considered** and relevant topics and programmes need to be **developed in joint conversations**. A practical solution could be to communicate differently with the different regions of the world while maintaining the focus on globally relevant topics as uniting approach. A **strategic link to EU priorities** could be created.

In order to have a common purpose and underline its added value, the network needs to **get the basics aligned**. Collective action must be understood as value in itself. **EUNIC needs to provide a clear vision and be accessible in its communication**. To bring everyone on the same page, we need to **meet colleagues and partners alike where they are at**. Why do we want to work together as EUNIC and in clusters? What is EUNIC in more practical terms? What is and can be expected from clusters and what is the aim of their work? This understanding as well as the **shared values and aims of the network can be highlighted more** and must be clearly communicated through all levels.



EUNIC relies heavily on its members and the Focal Points regarding internal information. Taking into account the risk of overburdening colleagues with high demands, **regular communication between EUNIC member headquarters, the EUNIC office and clusters** must be ensured. More structures could also support and motivate colleagues working in clusters.

In order to **make the added value of multilateral cooperation through EUNIC clear, more training on the cultural relations approach** is needed. **Evaluation and feedback** also need to be taken more into account to take the network forward. Feedback for example on Cluster Fund applications can be used as an entry point for training in cultural relations. Potential gatekeepers could be addressed and should be trained.

In order to **increase EUNIC's activity within Europe**, it is important to highlight the relevance of EU values also internally, although it is noted that often it might be more difficult to operate within the EU. It might be helpful to focus on a few current and globally relevant topics to streamline efforts and to unite under the cultural relations approach.

2) Cluster governance

Challenges identified:

- Different mandates and structural limitations of individual members
- Questions of setting up a legal entity as cluster: pros and cons.
- Many EUNIC members are unable to receive and administer grants from the Cluster Fund - how to manage common budgets and fulfil accounting criteria of national public administration? Currently only a handful of members can receive and administer funds on behalf of the cluster, such as the Goethe-Institut, Alliance Française and even those are facing audit related questions.
- Fluctuations in Cluster Fund contributions from EUNIC members' headquarters
- Questions of structural funding/ongoing support – financial independence and stability of clusters
- Establishing and maintaining other forms of support, e.g., through a cluster coordinator

Members agreed that there is no one size fits all solution to these challenges and rather a selection of solutions should be established and encouraged with **different scenarios for clusters inside the EU and those outside the EU**.

Lack of detailed knowledge makes it more difficult to establish a longer lasting proposal, it would be important to do a more detailed **mapping across the EUNIC membership on who can receive funding and what the legal limitations are**. In some cases, there is also a difference between not being able to receive funding and not being willing to. For clusters inside the EU if the model of creating a legal entity (a few clusters already have it) is helpful and there is a strong case for it, it could be supported on an ad hoc basis.

Next to the Cluster Fund, different types of funding based on microgrants could be useful to support clusters more structurally, particularly those that are starting their collaborations. These funds could be used to hire a cluster coordinator. While this solution would help to tackle several challenges, there is also a question of how this can be put into practice. Currently even with the EUNIC Cluster Fund there are budgetary fluctuations with every call based on the voluntary contributions of members.

For clusters outside of the EU, EUNIC should advocate for the EU to provide structural funding channelled from the EU Delegations to clusters to help finance support, e.g., hiring a coordinator. Currently the European Commission has invited Member States to participate in an OMC



group (Open Method of Coordination) on the governance of international cultural relations and this creates an opportunity to provide practical recommendations, such as the financial support from EU Delegations.

Another important potential solution raised was the proposal for the EUNIC office to channel funding to a local partner. For the Cluster Fund projects, if members of a cluster cannot receive the funding, the EUNIC office could transfer it to a trusted local partner. In this scenario the involvement and added value of the collaboration between the EUNIC cluster and the local partner would need to be emphasized and made clear.

3) Internal support and network communication

Challenges identified:

- Role of Headquarters in supporting engagement in clusters – mandates for multilateral cooperation and clearer priorities for EUNIC
- Role of Focal Points in communicating with colleagues and encouraging engagement
- How to be actively involved in clusters with few international representations?
- Level of engagement/priority areas

Many members deploy several **streams of communications to update their networks about EUNIC**: regular emails sharing the latest news or calls, often taking the opportunity to level up internal communication when a new initiative is shared (e.g., the Mobility Scheme) to encourage participation. Other more advanced tools are a dedicated EUNIC newsletter, or more advanced tools for network engagement, such as MS Teams or a more tailor-made platform that is under development for the French networks. Some members also regularly check in with their branches active in clusters and connect peers where possible and in the process, refresh their networks about the role of the headquarters and the Focal Points (a simpler task for members with limited networks).

Another possible avenue of dedicated EUNIC communication that was shared is organising so-called **homecoming days or other training moments for members'** worldwide staff. These events gather country directors/cultural attachés to give the latest in (bilateral) cultural cooperation or get them well equipped when starting new missions, and a number of members have been able to integrate EUNIC collaboration as an agenda point. In some cases, the EUNIC team is involved in such events to put faces to names and explain what EUNIC is. Offering this office in different languages helps these networks understand EUNIC better and members will team up more with the EUNIC office – not least to explain the strategic approach to international cultural relations and the direction the network aspires to take.

Members also appreciated and encouraged more the **joint hosting of EUNIC webinars** for their network, on top of dedicated live meetings. Also here, communication in the native language could help encourage the networks to understand better and get more involved in EUNIC cooperation or get involved in specific calls and projects. An **all-cluster presidents online meeting** was also proposed as a dedicated moment to gather all clusters in one session.

Members furthermore proposed to advance on an **improved database** of which member is active in which cluster and on what projects, in order to link interested colleagues within their networks. It was also pointed out that this sharing of information is a two-way street and shared responsibility: once members hear about changes in their local branches or in clusters, coordination with the EUNIC team should take place. Currently the EUNIC team is working on an advanced CRM that should help in this process.



5. Deep-dive breakout discussions on different EUNIC programme elements

Participants split into different groups based on topics of interest indicated beforehand. The goal of this session was to explore some of EUNICs current programme areas in more detail and to exchange individual member's views, experiences, and interests on each.

EUNIC Mobility Scheme

What's working well

Members who hosted a Mobility Scheme offer or attended one as participants reported back to the EUNIC office with overall positive feedback. It was agreed that the Mobility Scheme is a useful programme for both hosts and participants because of the possibility of **high-quality level of exchange** during the visits, the chance to get to know the local context, and (especially for younger colleagues) to get to know different ways of working abroad and how to create a network.

Colleagues who hosted participants noted that the Mobility Scheme gave them the opportunity to see their own organisation through a different lens and **get fresh perspectives on key topics** of shared strategic relevance for EUNIC.

Another good practice was the **direct involvement of participants** in the processes of working at the hosting institution. This level of practical exchange on cultural relations topics is useful and encouraging for both parties and an excellent opportunity to strengthen ties between organisations. Some hosts noted that to plan the visits with the wishes and objectives of the participants in mind, it was useful to offer preparatory online meetings for the participants before the visit took place.

What can be improved

Members who have not yet made a hosting offer as part of the Mobility Scheme noted that they struggled to **find strong and fitting topics** to share with participants. While the EUNIC office does not provide a template for hosting offers and lets hosts decide for themselves to write a hosting offer in an individual and creative way, more examples of hosting offer programmes can be made available upon request.

While the hosting offers generally offered a rich programme, it was noted that hosts struggled to find a **balance between sessions at the institute and site visits** showing the local context. It was suggested to create a lighter programme for participants and include more time for them to reach out themselves to local stakeholders for individual meetings and site visits.

To ensure more two-way exchanges, hosts can invite participants to prepare presentations or other types of interventions for the programme.

For some hosting offers it has been a great opportunity to learn more about EUNIC and specifically the EUNIC office in Brussels, it will be useful to include more general information about EUNIC in the hosting offer programme, for example with a short online seminar with representatives from the EUNIC office as part of the programme.

To provide more clarity on these points, **the EUNIC will offer a series of webinars** for hosts and participants to share good practices and provide a platform for exchange.



Another point that came up during the discussion was internal network communication about the Mobility Scheme. Members agreed that while there is high interest from headquarters in the programme, it will be beneficial for **members to increase their internal communication efforts** and use existing communication infrastructure such as newsletters in order to reach staff in junior positions as well as country offices outside of Europe for a higher diversity of hosting offers.

Finally, it was noted that for some Spanish or French speaking hosting offers there is a language barrier for participants who don't speak the local language. It is still encouraged to hold the hosting offer in a language other than English, but this will need to be communicated clearly to participants.

Future of European Spaces of Culture

As European Spaces of Culture will continue after its Preparatory Action phase (ending December 2023) with a follow-up contract granted by DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, the Focal Point meeting was an occasion to discuss **members' participation, internal communication, and ideas for the future project**. The EUNIC office is in conversation with DG EAC about the new contract, planned to be signed by the end of August. A new Call for ideas could be launched already in the autumn of 2023. This short period of time before signing indicates that the EUNIC office will need to move swiftly with the application, and members were requested to act swiftly too when asked for supporting documentation.

Regarding the new call, members discussed the importance for applicants to have **perspective if their proposal is not selected**. Until now, the application process followed two steps (shortlisting concept notes and selecting final applications), making it important for those promising but unsuccessful proposals to be enabled to still be implemented. Several scenarios for **alternative funding** should therefore be explored and discussed explicitly via members, EU Delegations, or other parties, but also redirecting these proposals to the EUNIC Cluster Fund, which is already happening successfully on a regular basis. Another avenue that the EUNIC office is considering is adjusting the two-step application process. The time spent between the concept notes and final applications proves to be valuable to improve the proposals and partnerships, but the pain point remains that some applicants could be left with too little for their time invested.

Furthermore, members expressed interest in applying a certain thematic focus in a new call, such as on **alignment with the UN SDGs**, or with **special attention to cultural relations in fragile contexts**. Different criteria and support mechanisms could be developed for different strands of a new call. To promote more equal ownership of future projects between European and local partners, some members proposed to explore **shared administrative and financial coordination** among them. This could be beneficial also because many members' branches are not able to receive third party funding such as from EUNIC.

Members also discussed how a new call, and its results, can be communicated jointly. Standard communication of the call is by sharing the central e-mails or newsletter messages from EUNIC with each member's network directly, which most members do. Several members pointed out that more **appealing documentation** would help reaching out to their network, such as an attractive brief summary or a factsheet laying out the basics of European Spaces of Culture. Members also appreciated **joint webinars with the EUNIC team** offered to their networks about the project, often in their own language, which makes it easier to explain the importance and purpose of the programme, and how it fits into the wider strategy of this member.



There is also a need to keep track of members' local branches' **lasting participation in and commitment to projects**, once selected. Regularly, implementation points out that not all members of a project team stay involved to the project despite committing beforehand, due to staff change, capacity, or other factors). While such fluctuations are inherent to EUNIC, more efforts need to be made in a joint fashion to make sure commitment lasts. As the EUNIC team does not speak to each partner in each project, it was suggested was to host **joint onboarding meetings** with members' headquarters and their local branches that are involved in the projects.

Training models for cultural relations staff

The EUNIC office is planning to commission a creation of a training framework based on a series of open-source modules which would address different needs to cover gaps in skills and competences of EUNIC and other cultural relations professionals.

In order for the training framework to be fit for purpose, the aim of this brainstorm group discussion was to identify specific areas and aspects where such training would be appreciated as well as to understand what kind of training offer is currently available and carried out by individual members for diplomats and colleagues from cultural institutes.

Defining the target audience for such trainings is crucial:

- Targeting heads of diplomatic missions to demonstrate the relevance of culture;
- Training for headquarters who can then train their respective networks worldwide;
- Training for staff soon to be deployed;
- Training for local staff who is more involved in the implementation of activities;
- Important to acknowledge the different needs for colleagues from cultural institutes and colleagues from embassies.

Content areas where training would be needed and appreciated include the following:

- Universal values and principles
- Modules on intercultural competences (inspiration from others such as Anna Lindh Foundation)
- Training on why we do "culture"/cultural relations (particularly important for diplomats)
- Distinction between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations (making a stronger and tangible case for cultural relations)
- Modules on how the EU works
- Exercises on how to set up projects and how to look for partners
- Good practices/case studies of cooperation in clusters and with local partners - What works, what doesn't?
- Examples of partnerships - how to go about them? What works, what doesn't?
- Examples of governance models for cultural relations (particularly for clusters)

In such trainings it will be important to **find a balance between theory and practical examples and exercises**.

Other points for consideration:

- Important to have different case studies per region/country and adopt approaches accordingly
- More regional exchanges on clusters and for clusters
- Inspiration on the co-creation approach and process for training from the Climate Culture(s) Creative Lab



- It is often easier to focus on cultural relations (rather than traditional diplomacy) with younger diplomats
- Good knowledge of languages is important

Mapping of what HQs are currently doing:

DutchCulture:

- Sessions for students of cultural studies and international relations
- Sessions for young diplomats (organising visits to cultural partners in the Netherlands)
- Online sessions for cultural attachés in collaboration with the MFA and homecoming days

Camões: The diplomatic institute organises study visits to Camões.

Hungarian Ministry of Culture: Different target groups show a contrast in their approaches, namely cultural institutes vs embassies (cultural relations vs. cultural diplomacy).

Czech Centres: Annual homecoming days with fixed slot for EUNIC. Since this year these are also open to local staff and not only directors.

Ifa/Goethe-Institut: The diplomatic day organised by the federal MFA brings in Goethe-Institut and ifa to share examples and practices.

Swedish Institute: The annual encounter with diplomats focuses on information sharing and creating links with relevant Swedish cultural institutions and operators.

Austrian MFA:

- Pre-deployment training is organised in each division of the MFA
- Diplomatic academy
- Homecoming days with a dedicated slot on EUNIC
- Mandatory reporting on EUNIC activity once a year for colleagues working in branches worldwide

French networks: Distinction between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations is not made internally; different levels of training are offered:

- Diplomatic academy
- Dedicated training by Alliance Française
- Training by Institut français targeting different profiles of staff, more content-led in its approach (topic-specific, but also modules on EU and EUNIC)
- Annual 2-day homecoming days for 500+ staff, different formats, sessions, encounters with national and European stakeholders

Slovenian MFA: Pre-deployment training on Slovenian culture abroad and on European collaboration

Greek MFA: Offering a weeklong academy for young diplomats focusing on cultural relations and European and international collaboration

6. General Assembly in Copenhagen, Denmark in June 2023

The next **EUNIC General Assembly will take place at the Danish Cultural Institute in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 June** with **Camilla Mordhorst becoming the new EUNIC**



president. The broader agenda was shared and discussed with participants. The goal for this GA will be to engage colleagues in conversations around cultural relations and to jointly reflect on EUNIC's approaches – what they are, and whether they are working well. A first optional afternoon will be held on the first day for colleagues or organisations new to EUNIC to have a more introductory briefing and conversation about the work and opportunities through our collective network. This will also provide a more informal space for questions and queries from the membership.

Two seats at the Board of Directors will become available, including the Vice Presidency. Interested candidates are invited to contact EUNIC until 1 June. Formal candidacies will be communicated leading up to the GA.

[Online registrations to the GA should be done under this link](#) as soon as possible. Colleagues are encouraged to **book their accommodation** as soon as possible too as many simultaneous events limit the availabilities of accommodation in Copenhagen at this time. The General Assembly will **not be organised as hybrid event**.

Following the decision of the GA in Brussels in December 2022 on **membership fees, an increase of 25% is effective in 2023.**

Upcoming EUNIC Knowledge Sharing Workshops

Two EUNIC Knowledge Sharing Workshops will be presented at the GA for approval. Colleagues are currently finalising the application documents, which will be submitted to members ahead the GA.

Building on [EUNIC's published resources on fair collaboration](#), DutchCulture proposes a workshop around the topic of **decolonising cultural relations**. In line with previous workshops on [artistic freedom](#) and [working in fragile contexts](#), ifa together with Goethe-Institut propose an exchange on the **changes of EUNIC member's strategy, operations and focus following Russia's aggressions against Ukraine and shifting geopolitics** in the wider sense. This workshop would most likely take place in autumn online or hybrid.

Danish Cultural Institute expressed their interest in organizing a workshop in the future around the topic of **cultural rights** as this is becoming more and more relevant in the last years.

Members are encouraged to put forward topics they want to exchange on and imagined workshops can be different to previous ones. It is crucial that relevant experts from member organisations attend these workshops in order to maintain a high level of exchanges which might be the starting point for future processes around the topic. These workshops should be co-created and should allow two-way conversations around processes.

Proposals for future Knowledge Sharing Workshops can be presented for approval at each EUNIC General Assembly. Before [submitting a proposal via this template](#), please contact Michelle Sun at michelle.sun@eunicglobal.eu.

New Cluster Fund Call for Proposals

The **next Cluster Fund Call for Proposals** will open again for clusters worldwide to apply with projects implemented in 2024. This year, the EUNIC office aims at publishing the call by end of July. The call will close again in early November.



No major changes in the framing parameters and eligibility criteria are foreseen. The optional thematic focus in the last years has been on culture and the SDGs and youth engagement. This year, EUNIC proposes an **optional focus on culture addressing the climate crisis**, also to link to the outcomes of the Climate Culture(s) project. As relevant guiding principles in the longer term, sustainability and fair collaboration will continue to be included as parameters more horizontally.

As every year, the total amount of available funding from the Cluster Fund relies on contributions from EUNIC members. A **call for contributions** will be sent to all members via e-mails. All members are encouraged to inform if and how much they will contribute to the EUNIC cluster team via clusters@eunicglobal.eu. So far, four members have confirmed their contribution.

Finally, the recent practice of establishing a **Cluster Fund jury of EUNIC member colleagues** has proven to be highly successful. Being on the jury has been a great opportunity for colleagues to get to know EUNIC procedures from within and ensures the high quality of selected projects for the entire network. Hence, Focal Point colleagues are invited to reach out to their internal networks and nominate candidates for the next Cluster Fund jury, which will meet for a selection meeting in November 2023. Experience of the evolution of cultural relations practice, interest in the EUNIC network and experience of grants schemes are key experience required.

7. Wider member exchange & discussion on the role of EUNIC Focal Points

Colleagues were given a moment to **reflect on their role as Focal Point for the development of the EUNIC network and their own institute** and were invited to take the opportunity to **exchange with their peers on wider and pressing topics beyond the EUNIC framework**.

Greek colleagues noted that in current times of transition in Greece, a training with and for diplomats on EUNIC issues and how to incorporate and apply for projects especially in the Western Balkans would be very useful. In light of his next rotation to Skopje, the Austrian colleague noted the MFA's strong focus on Western Balkans which also translates into efforts at cluster level to create stronger links with this region. A second area of expertise he would be happy to share with colleagues were sustainability and the SDGs as well as the climate crisis. In similar terms, the British Council colleague raised his experience in how cultural relations related to questions of sustainability and the SDGs, which he noted to be a big strategic question for the British Council both internally and externally.

Questions for further exchange raised by participants included the following:

- Current **regional priorities & target audiences, main challenges & needs** of each organisation; current **national discourses and cultural policy developments** (ifa)
- **Information about EU tenders & calls** and sharing experience on how to apply successfully (Instituto Cervantes)
- Sharing experiences of **problems with legal status** around the world (e.g., belonging to Embassy but having commercial activities) (Instituto Cervantes)
- How to **integrate artist and practitioners' perspectives into cultural relations approaches** and organisational learning of our institutes? (DutchCulture and Lithuanian Culture Institute)
- Articulating the values of having an institute, for countries who do not have one, Also the topic of **common cultural institutes**? A question that came up as the Slovenian Ministry is currently signing MoUs with different Ministries of Culture (Slovenian MFA)
- Have **more data and structural information on what other countries are doing** (how many cultural attachés & cultural institutes, what are the budgets, are institutes



dependent on Ministry of Foreign Affairs or of Culture, or both, etc.); challenge of different ministries often not talking to each other – important to have data to make convincing point (highlighting international comparisons for certain countries where only speaking about importance of culture doesn't work) (Swedish Institute)

- How to **cooperate within the EU Open Method of Coordination group and other EU level fora**. How to set priorities & brainstorm together? (Greek MFA)
- **Exploring geographical priorities both regions and countries. Exploring tensions with specific countries** should be brought up at EU level in order to avoid weakening bilateral relations as it has severe impact on EUNIC's possibilities to operate in certain countries (Danish Cultural Institute)
- As the French MFA and Institut français currently have a strong focus on **sub-Saharan Africa** and a great interest in the topic of **decolonisation**, it would be helpful to know what EUNIC clusters are doing in this regard and what plans for the upcoming new EU funding are. Better coordination on how to deal with these funds internally and exchanges on similar experiences with other members would be helpful. (Institut français)
- Dealing with new and evolving mandate and role, e.g., becoming a **funding body** (Lithuanian Culture Institute)
- Peer to peer support on the topic of **opening new (first) international offices** in Germany (Ukrainian Institute) and opportunity to explore together what a contemporary new institute should be.

Wider programme

Complementing the meeting agenda, colleagues were invited at the headquarters of the Lithuanian Culture Institute for an introduction by colleagues to the institute's work both nationally and internationally. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to explore the history of Vilnius through a guided walking tour and to delve into the city's rich cultural offer by visiting exhibitions at the [National Gallery of Art](#) and the [Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania](#).



Visit of the Lithuanian Culture Institute



Guided walking tour of the historic city centre



Participants

In total 26 colleagues joined the EUNIC Focal Points meeting, representing 25 members in addition to the EUNIC office.

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