# EUNIC Regional Seminar MENA

## Amman, Jordan
## 7-8 March 2022

## Report



On 7 and 8 March 2022, the EUNIC regional seminar for clusters in the MENA region brought together representatives from 10 of the 13 clusters in the region (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Casablanca, Rabat, Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia) as well as two colleagues from EUNIC members' head offices particularly active in the region – AECID and Arts Council Malta. The seminar was co-hosted with the EUNIC cluster in Jordan.

This report serves not only as meeting report of the regional seminar, but it also includes guidance, tips and resources for the short-, mid- and long-term development of clusters in the MENA region and beyond. All presentations used in the seminar are available on Google Drive.

For any follow-up questions, contact the EUNIC team via clusters@eunicglobal.eu.



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## Objectives

The objectives of the cluster seminar in Amman were the following:

1. To support the **development and strengthening of EUNIC clusters** in the region
2. To **better understand EUNIC** and its recent developments as members of the network
3. To understand the most **relevant topics in the region**, identifying **specificities and opportunities for working together** in the region
4. To openly discuss and explore solutions to some of the **challenges of working together collaboratively as EUNIC**
5. To better understand **EUNIC's strategic partnership with the EU** and to explore together **cultural relations' principles** and how to put them into practice, including projects in cooperation with EU Delegations
6. To **get to know each other**, re-connect after a period of online activity, to network and exchange as a leadership peer group

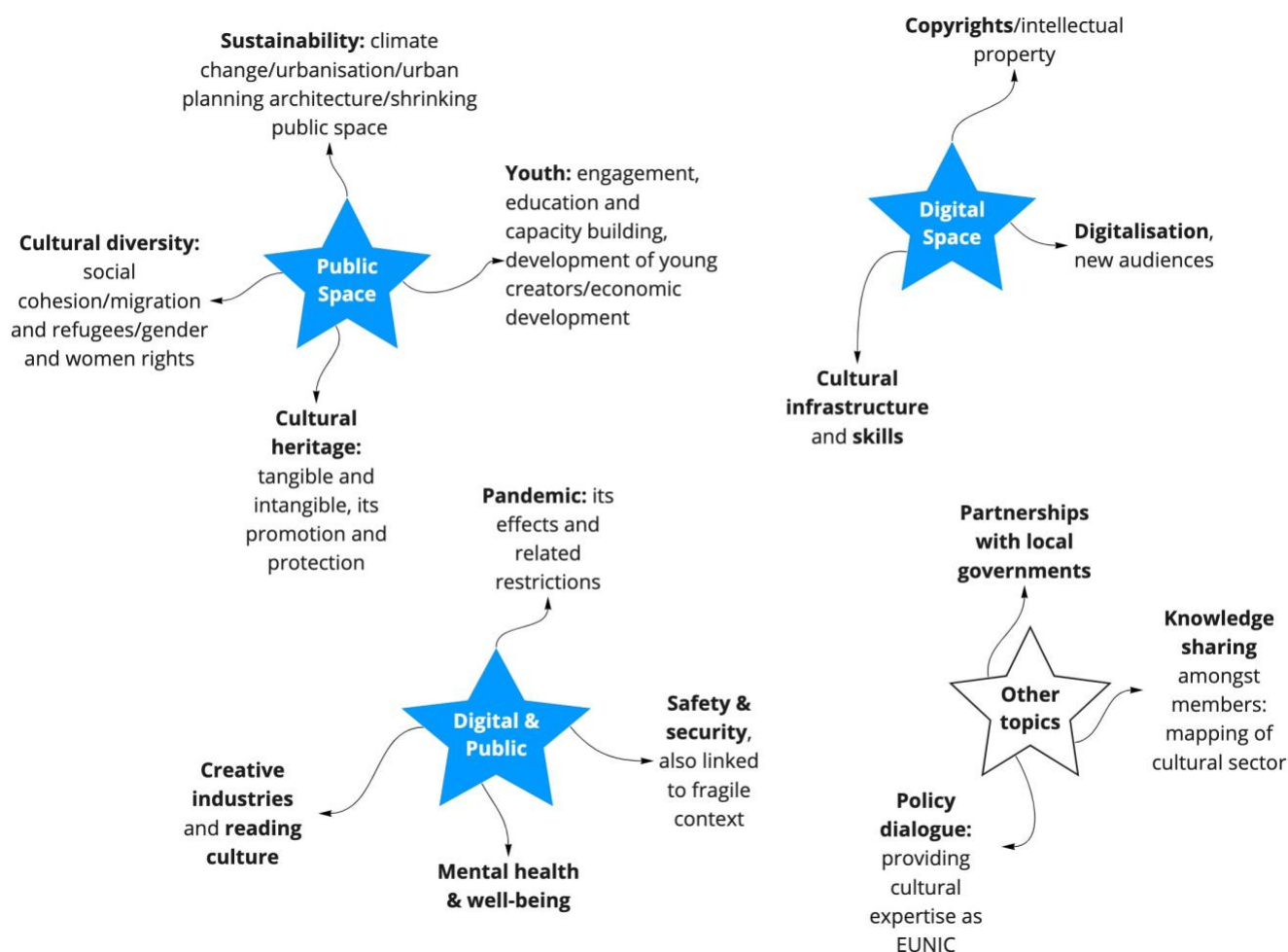## Introduction and group exercise on fair collaboration

The seminar was opened by welcoming words by Juan Vicente Piqueras Salinas, director of Instituto Cervantes in Amman and co-host of the seminar Laura Hartz, current president of the Jordan cluster and director of Goethe-Institut Amman. EUNIC director Andrew Manning gave an overview of the status of the EUNIC network, its evolution over time, developments in the partnership with the EU and of the context and role the clusters as a major driving force for the network's future journey.

Participants then had the opportunity to discuss **core values and potential dilemmas when working in the field of international cultural cooperation**, using directly tools from the recently published resources on Fair Collaboration commissioned by EUNIC. Cluster colleagues are invited to continue to use these resources when discussing among each other and with partners.

## Latest societal and cultural developments in MENA

The first content session of the seminar focused on emerging themes and priorities from across the region with participants exploring common regional topics and opportunities for cultural relations projects. The following **topics** arose as main cross-cutting issues across the region:

**Sustainability:** climate change/urbanisation/urban planning architecture/shrinking public space

**Youth:** engagement, education and capacity building, development of young creators/economic development

**Cultural diversity:** social cohesion/migration and refugees/gender and women rights

**Public Space**

**Cultural heritage:** tangible and intangible, its promotion and protection

**Copyrights**/intellectual property

**Digital Space**

**Digitalisation**, new audiences

**Cultural infrastructure** and **skills**

**Pandemic:** its effects and related restrictions

**Digital & Public**

**Safety & security**, also linked to fragile context

**Creative industries** and **reading culture**

**Mental health & well-being**

**Partnerships with local governments**

**Other topics**

**Knowledge sharing** amongst members: mapping of cultural sector

**Policy dialogue:** providing cultural expertise as EUNIC

One key line of enquiry was the topic of where topics for action originate. Are they driven by the EU's agenda setting, by individual EUNIC member perspectives or deriving directly from local interests and needs? Also: what are explicitly *not* topics to address? In parallel, participants were invited to reflect on what the true drivers of their respective cluster activities were – specific instruments or events, specific individual member agendas, or if it is a truly content led agenda distilled collectively based on local perspectives?

Participants argued that as 'outsiders' they can sometimes more easily identify content needs, and that it would be helpful to be informed in advance about relevant EU topics in order to be able to link activities, e.g., to the ongoing European Year of Youth in 2022

In line with the identified themes, participants discussed the added value of cooperation through a EUNIC cluster, and which topics can be addressed through a cluster more effectively then by an individual institution alone.

### Added value of being a EUNIC cluster

- **More bargaining power** with local organisations/authorities and EU Delegations, a collective voice – more visibility, advantage of being able to represent the bigger picture rather than your own embassy/political entity that might change its stance rather quickly
- Ability to be a **valuable partner**: the need to make clear what a cluster can bring to the table and that the sum of activities is more than individual efforts
- Need to identify strength that every cluster member involved can contribute and value and use those strengths
- **Pooling of resources** – knowledge exchange, expertise, infrastructure, diversity of audience, sharing locations, etc. – far more than just financial.
- **Mutual understanding on key topics** among cluster members, e.g., regarding freedom of expression
- **Flexibility** in implementing projects
- More **connections to local scenes** and discourses
- Easier to engage with a broader range of civil society actors / less narrowly political than, e.g., EUD ('keep doors open for dialogue')

Topic setting amongst different cluster members has been identified as one challenge, however the aspect of **variable geometry** encouraged by EUNIC helps as not all members need to engage on everything at the same level. The value of smaller initiatives in comparison to big one-off showcasing events was identified by many as strong point of cluster activities. The opportunity of sharing experience and knowledge among the cluster and the chance – and need – to learn from each other was also highlighted. Initiatives of the wider network, such as the Job Shadowing exchange in Tunisia, have been particularly mentioned in this context.

## Strengthening clusters in the region

The EUNIC team gave an overview of the broader EUNIC context in which clusters operate and of recent milestones in the cluster network's development. By sharing examples from the network, initiatives and resources available to the clusters online, it was discussed how clusters can best respond to and address the topics identified in the first session in practical terms, including questions of governance, internal collaboration and opportunities to engage with the wider network and local partners.

As EUNIC's current Creative Europe funding period is ending and the EUNIC Cluster Fund is celebrating its tenth anniversary as the network's primary internal funding mechanism to support the development of clusters through joint collaborative projects, EUNIC has commissioned a **report on the Cluster Fund and the wider development of the cluster network**. All participants have been invited to complete the online survey informing the research.

Alongside the continuous growth and professionalisation of the network and its clusters, **having a shared vision and strategy** for a cluster has proven to be crucial to make members' work coherent. For this reason, the network developed some governance tools to support colleagues working in clusters worldwide, such as inviting each cluster to have a Cluster Charter and their own **Cluster Strategy**. In line with
EUNIC's strategic framework 2020-24, the EUNIC team raised the importance of having an updated cluster strategy as shared guiding tool for internal collaboration and joint activities.

Developing such a strategy should be seen as **a shared and collaborative process** among cluster colleagues and involve relevant local stakeholders, such as EU Delegations and other

local cultural and civil society partners. Being fully aware of the time and effort needed to write a meaningful and valuable strategy, the EUNIC team offers individually tailored workshops to support clusters elaborating a new strategy and will give regular inputs on how to write such a strategy, also linking it to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Especially regarding the challenge of regular staff turnover within a cluster as mentioned by several participants, tools such as the cluster strategy can be helpful in securing an institutional memory as strategies are multi-annual.

Clusters have also found different ways to **establish continuity in leadership by introducing co-presidency or presidential teams** consisting of a president and one or two vice-presidents. Other cluster governance topics of interest that were discussed further included:

- The model of **engaging a cluster coordinator** to support the administrative work of EUNIC clusters has gathered interest. Several clusters in the network have adopted this possibility, each in their own way of involving additional help, e.g., by **recruiting a part-time executive secretary, an intern, a freelance coordinator, etc.** The EUNIC cluster in Saudi Arabia, represented at this seminar, recruited two cluster coordinators directly through the financial support of the EU Delegation, which sparked a lot of interest.
- The topic of **membership fees** was vividly discussed as some participants showed interest while others expressed previous complicated experiences within their cluster or scepticism towards this tool. While there are no specific guidelines on the amount of membership fees, clusters are encouraged to establish amounts that are feasible and do not exclude participation of members. These fees can then be used e.g., to top up certain project funding or to finance the position of a cluster coordinator.

Following these discussions, participants were invited in world café format to share positive developments and practices in their clusters as well as feedback and recommendations to the EUNIC members' headquarters, the EUNIC office and EU Delegations and partners.

### Success stories

- **Sharing of knowledge, resources and support** is an enabling factor to achieve something that would be impossible as individual organisation.
- Common projects lead to **a feeling of shared ownership and cohesion** among cluster members:
  - The Tfanen project brought the cluster members in Tunisia closer together via the creation of a project board.
  - Meeting regularly, exchange and support within members has strengthened the cluster in OPT, which culminated in a successful Cluster Fund project with shared ownership looking now at joint follow-up activities with the EU Delegation, taking the scale and ambition of projects even further.
  - While the implementation of the Cluster Fund project in Algeria was complicated, it created an exchange with and link to the EU Delegation.

### Recommendations to EUNIC Members' Headquarters

- Headquarters should **streamline the mandate to work on European collaboration** through job descriptions and annual reporting on specific indicators and achievements.
- **Exchange of best practices on EUNIC** – headquarters of individual EUNIC members should facilitate regular exchanges/meeting of their staff active in EUNIC to share good practices on European collaboration through EUNIC clusters.
- Headquarters should provide **communication package on EUNIC** before deployment and at Ambassador level, e.g., annual Ambassadors' or directors' seminar by each member.

- Headquarters should **communicate better about EUNIC** – be transparent about how EUNIC works, advertise the newsletter, share GA reports. Ensure more and better communication and regular information between focal points and network. Colleagues don't always know who their focal point is.
- EUNIC GA should **support increasing capacity and more resources at the EUNIC office** to manage the cluster network.
- EUNIC GA should **reinforce the regional structures** to support more strategic engagement in EUNIC and add to operations of clusters.

## Recommendations to the EUNIC office

*On the Cluster Fund*
- Explore a **different timeline** for the launch of the call and deadline of submission (e.g., launch the call during summer).
- **Raise the budget for each project** and have fewer projects shortlisted in each call instead, prioritise clusters without other funds.
- Lower the **co-financing rate**.

*On communication from the office to clusters*
- It's good to have **reminders** of events, research, calls, etc.
- **Resources available are rich**, helpful, and appreciated (webinars, guidelines, seminars, etc.)
- **E-mails are often too long** with too dense information.
- It is difficult for cluster presidents to share all information with cluster members – the EUNIC office should **reach out to all cluster members directly**.
- Communication **solely in English** might exclude due to language barriers.
- Each call for proposals has different terms and timings, often **wording is not very accessible** and clear.

*On support from the EUNIC office to clusters*
- Offer **more regional meetings** to facilitate decentralised knowledge share within clusters in a region.
- Offer **more opportunities** for exchange such as physical meetings, job shadowing, etc.
- Offer **workshops on communication** for clusters on how to implement the EUNIC visual guidelines.
- Share more possibilities for clusters to **publish activities** (on EUNIC website, in newsletter, create own cluster website, etc.)

## Recommendations to EU Delegations and partners

- **Recognise EUNIC's expertise** in cultural relations more and not consider EUNIC clusters a vehicle for EU visibility.
- Give the cluster more space and **trust to do their work** when implementing a joint project.
- Recognise the **potential and power of culture** and its contribution to other major policy areas.
- Be **more transparent about funding opportunities** and the different modalities possible.
- Open possibilities for **smaller and more flexible grants**.
- The EEAS Headquarters should **inform and mobilise EUDs better** to engage in cultural relations projects, not the least by assigning colleagues with proven cultural expertise to EUDs.

## MENA clusters and EU Delegation partnerships

The Joint Communication of 2016 and the Administrative Arrangement between EUNIC and the EU of 2017 set out the main pathways for **increased partnerships between EUNIC clusters and EU Delegations** in putting the EU's approach to cultural relations into practice. The [Joint Guidelines: EC-EEAS-EUNIC partnership](#) (last updated in 2021) are an important tool to drive these developments. In practice, shaping these partnerships is easier said than done and **the instruments available to facilitate this are far from ideal and not yet fully adapted** to this new form of cooperation.

From experiences with European Spaces of Culture, the EUNIC Cluster Fund and additional EUNIC/EUD projects, the EUNIC team encounters common pain points as well as some good practices of these relationships. In a moderated discussion some of these were highlighted:

- **Mutual expectations:** Sometimes clusters expect the partnership to be limited to funding and financial transactions only. Sometimes the EUD perceives the cluster as a merely vehicle for EU visibility and communication: seminar participants indicated experiences with the EUD approaching the cluster as executive agency or service provider rather than content or strategic partner. Both situations demonstrate a lack of recognition and understanding of each other's strengths and complementarities as strategic partners towards long-term impact, hampering readiness to cooperate on a deeper level beyond funding. Experience in **Brazil** and **Saudi Arabia** show that even if the EUD does not have large budgets available, it can support activities of the cluster through a cluster coordinator.

- **Understanding the EUD's role:** As the structure for the EU's external action in culture is relatively new and underdeveloped, it is often unclear for the EU Delegation itself – and by extension to EUNIC – how to contribute beyond the superficial or funding.
  - With the EUD having limited experience of doing cultural work on its own, it's important to share good examples of where it does add value in **content** (EUD can complement other topics with cultural action) and **networks** (EUD works with civil society partners in other fields and can make transnational links to EUDs in neighbouring countries), **communication** (EUD brings in different target audiences) and **facilitation** (EUD can provide safe spaces and give political weight to open doors that otherwise would remain closed).
  - With the value of culture often underestimated, larger EUD priorities could well match the objectives of a project, convincing the EUD to get on board on content level – see the Spaces examples in **India**, **Mongolia** and **Tajikistan** with the topic of climate action, **Cameroon** with outreach to youth, **South Africa** with human rights, **Sri Lanka** with freedom of speech, etc.
  - With EUD staff rotating or culture being low on the priority list, having regular exchange with a wider circle of EUD colleagues is useful: beyond the cultural focal point, aim for the cooperation section as well as Heads of Delegation.

- **Finding funding models:** EUD funding for cultural activities is limited and sometimes not fully evident from which programme line of the EUD this is coming or by which modalities this can spent. Clusters should therefore explore options with different sections of the EUD. In the case of **Senegal**, financing went through the cooperation section, in the case of **Egypt**, financing went through the political section (as an explicit focus was on supporting policy developments in culture linked to ministerial bodies). In **Bolivia**, the funding was linked to the human rights instrument. Clusters should also jointly with the EUD explore the different contracting models available for EU-funded projects. Also here, regular exchange with the EUD with higher level staff is crucial to identify these possibilities.

- **Finding a collaboration model:** A common challenge is that the financial and legal responsibility of an EU contract falls on one cluster member; the larger the cluster, the more challenging this is. The cluster collaboration model needs to be tailored to the members, their mandates and capacity and every member should be invited to take part and contribute. Another challenge is the different understanding of cultural relations work by individual members of the cluster. These challenges can be tackled by for instance establishing a cluster coordinator or signing MoUs clearly stating the roles and responsibilities for the members. Of great importance is also the jointly designed cluster strategies.

## Major EU funded projects led by EUNIC members in the region

In a moderated discussion, Andrea Jacob, Goethe-Institut and cluster president in Tunisia, Martin Daltry from British Council in OPT, and Amalia de Lizaur López, EUNIC Focal Point from AECID, presented three recent cases of EU-funded EUNIC projects. The discussion in plenary looked at **key factors for fruitful EUNIC-EU cooperation in the region**, and lessons learnt from these projects to look at ways forward to some of the challenges of working together collaboratively as EUNIC. Furthermore, the session inspired colleagues to think of **opportunities for new EU-funded projects** in the region.

Martin Daltry presented **Bethlehem Site-Specific Theatre Festival**, a project selected for financing from the 2019 edition of the EUNIC Cluster Fund implemented in July 2021 in the framework of the postponed Bethlehem Capital of Arab Culture 2020. In addition to site-specific performances, EUNIC members hosted workshops on site-specific theatre. Through the project the cluster has an opportunity to engage with local partners and civil society. The project was very successful, brought together local communities and professionals and attracted significant interest from the EU Delegation for a larger-scale action.

The EU Delegation has invited the Goethe-Institut together with the British Council to develop this project idea as a concept note for **a much larger multiannual initiative**. Current discussions with the EU Delegation are based on mutual understanding and interest, there are also possibilities to work with the Ministry of Culture on cultural heritage and creative industries; both topics are important in the context of OPT. Once the concept note is approved by the EU Delegation, the challenge will be to define specific mechanisms to involve other cluster members.

Andrea Jacob gave an update about the **Tfanen project** in Tunisia which is coming to an end in May 2022. Tfanen is one of the first large-scale EU-funded project run by EUNIC under the British Council lead. Andrea focused on explaining the mechanisms of involving other members of the cluster in the project. The cluster is part of the board of the project which meets once a month to discuss updates and progress. EUNIC members are also realising specific activities through a sub-granting system made available as part of the project, this ensures that members with smaller resources and scale of operations can be also included throughout the project. The cluster president has regular meetings with the EU Delegation, an important element in maintaining an active relationship as part of the EUNIC-EU partnership. The EUD in Tunisia has plans to invest large budgets to support democracy and social cohesion in the country.

Amalia de Lizaur presented a **new multiannual large-scale project starting in Tunisia**. The project is led by AECID in partnership with the British Council and in the name of EUNIC Tunisia, funded by the EU Delegation for 15 million euros with involvement of the Ministry of Culture and Creative Tunisia (Creative Europe). The new project has a different target group and is focusing on youth, culture, and sports. The project lead is currently in the process of hiring the team leader and establishing an orientation group (involving cluster members) as well as evaluation and reporting processes. The project team leader will be local to connect better with stakeholders at the national level.

The project is not a direct continuation of Tfanen, but the new team plans to exchange lessons learnt from the past project. The engagement of the cluster is still to be determined, but there is an added value of EUNIC members implementing activities through subgrants. Additionally, EUNIC members could add expertise to develop specific projects for young target audiences in specific areas beyond the capital city. From the technical perspective, the development and signing of the project took over two years with a process of open discussion, join development of project ideas, as well as lengthy tendering process.

### Some challenges and opportunities emerging from the discussion in plenary

Every EU Delegation is structured differently and has a different country strategy and thematic focus. For EUNIC colleagues it is often difficult to know who to talk to, where decisions are taken and how to approach the EU Delegation in the spirit of the partnership. Cultural focal points are often communication officers with limited mandate and expertise in culture, and limited knowledge of the joint EUNIC-EU partnership. Colleagues need to do background research into their respective EU Delegations. Often larger scale opportunities emerge from the development cooperation and political sections, but they are less accessible to colleagues.

There are several existing financial methods for the EU Delegations to support cultural relations projects (PAGoDA contracts, service contracts, grant agreements, and direct invoicing) all of these have their unique advantages and disadvantages, details of each modality are outlined in the Joint Guidelines. Currently there is no specific modality to finance cultural relations projects under the EUNIC-EU partnership and colleagues need to find creative solutions to pursue these.

As EUNIC clusters don't have a legal status, often one of the EUNIC members signs a contract with the EU Delegation on behalf of the cluster. Several EUNIC members (AECID, British Council, Goethe-Institut, Instituto Camões I.P.) have the PAGoDA status which means that they can administer much larger amounts from the EU institutions, which also involve much stricter governance and financial reporting rules.

EUNIC's role in the partnership is not only to financially administer the grants, but to provide a forum to discuss topics and projects, provide specific expertise in the broader culture and education fields, as well as provide access to larger local networks of stakeholders and civil society organisations based on years of building relations of trust on the ground.

## Fragile contexts, going deeper in the MENA region

Jordi Baltà, author of the EUNIC Peace & Stability report presented his report to the group to introduce a group discussion around the status of **EUNIC member operations in the most fragile parts of the MENA region** including main actions, priorities, and needs: what possibilities are there for deeper EUNIC collaboration? What is the added value of European collaboration on these topics?

The report has been presented at different occasions recently **linking to broader EU policy on cultural heritage, security, and sustainable development.** This topic proves to be relevant to several EUNIC members and clusters active in the region, fragility can manifest itself through different aspect in the individual local, country contexts. As a next step locally, EUNIC should unpick relevant findings and explore how these are addressed in different countries.

Are other fragilities such as gender considered and addressed through the report? This particular topic can be addressed through either through the prism of societal fragility but also as more

**transversally as an aspect linked to several fragilities**, e.g., climate change affecting more women and children. It is also evident through some of the case studies explored through the research.

## Countries, topics, and activities discussed in plenary

**Libya:** several EUNIC members are interested in reinitiating activities in Libya linked to language courses (language for empowerment), climate change and its impact on cultural heritage. British Council has an office in Libya and so does the Embassy of France. Goethe-Institut organizes activities from the office in Tunis. Goethe-Institut Tunisia is currently exploring possibility of setting up a EUNIC cluster in Libya, potentially involving Embassy of France, British Council and Embassy of Italy. The Embassy of Austria working from Tunis also covers Libya, but there is not cultural activity.

**Yemen**: France is covering Yemen from its office in Riyadh. British Council has long experience in Yemen despite the war, currently it has two offices in Yemen as the country is increasingly split across geographical lines. Goethe-Institut in Jordan is covering Yemen, currently working through the German House, a special fund via the German MFA. Goethe-Institut is also receiving a grant through the EU Delegation to Yemen, with a project starting in April. Working in Yemen leads to many practical questions including aspects of safety, permissions, humanitarian aid and development funds. It is important to connect cultural professionals working in this field. Goethe-Institut is looking for other interested members to create a Yemen cluster in exile: a united voice is crucial for advocating for the importance of culture in this area and through impactful activities. Another possibility instead of creating a cluster in Yemen is to create a peer group on knowledge sharing on concrete activities.

**OPT**: Austrian Cultural Forum in Tel Aviv trying to work in OPT and engage with the OPT cluster, but corridors for exchange are shrinking. Active involvement of the British Council is seen recently particularly in cultural heritage through the Cultural Protection Fund, and some cooperation with the ALIPH foundation in the Gaza strip. Negotiations are under way for an EU-funded large-scale project in OPT.

**Syria**: British Council based in Lebanon covers Syria. Goethe-Institut HQ are exploring possibilities of engagement in Syria, but it is not clear on what basis. More knowledge of other initiatives is needed. Members are careful to implement activities that might be perceived as supporting the Syrian government.

**AECID** works to ensure that cultural topics come to the fore through bigger development projects. The importance of more integration of cultural institutions and development agencies – the practitioners' network with a dedicated task force on culture and development is a good starting point.

The **Austrian Cultural Forum in Cairo** elaborated on the launch of a regional digital platform, connecting six countries in the region (Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, OPT, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia), and digital workshops on different art forms focusing on youth, so far with huge outreach and a proven good way of connecting across borders.

**British Council**, besides working in Yemen, OPT, Lebanon, Syria (from Beirut), also covers Iraq. Focus areas are protection and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, connections between local and international artists through international collaboration grants, language courses linked to creating sense of identity, power of culture to respond to global challenges, in particular climate change.

Several members mentioned fruitful collaborations with the ALIPH foundation and UNESCO.

Added value of European cultural cooperation on these topics:

- **Combining areas of expertise**, including sharing intelligence on operational and logistical aspects, including safety, permits.
- Talking with **single voice for better advocacy** and funding opportunities in this area
- Some **members with larger networks** are more active in the field – by pooling resources and working together this can lead to more lasting impact
- Good opportunity for closer, deeper, and **more impactful cooperation with EU Delegations**, showcasing long-term impact in this area via culture.

**Next steps**
- Explore the possibility of setting up a **cluster or closer EUNIC member dialogue on/in Libya**
- Explore the possibility of either setting up a **cluster in exile or peer support group on Yemen**
- Have an **overview of EU activities on this topic** in the region
- Clusters are encouraged to **use the presented report as basis for internal discussion** and as inspiring practical framework to create concrete focus through specific activities
- **Follow-up conversation** with clusters in the region interested in the topic

## Discussion about suitable action in response to the situation in Ukraine

Given the status of **the war in Ukraine**, participants entered a previously unscheduled discussion on the topic due to the urgency of the situation and the expressed interest of participants in discussing possibilities and suitable actions for clusters to react and show solidarity. While colleagues in, e.g., Morocco and Algeria noted the **difficulties of taking any obvious action** due to the neutral positions of the respective national governments, colleagues from Goethe-Institut highlighted that they had been encouraged to undertake actions of solidarity by their Headquarters in Munich. Colleagues exchanged on actions undertaken or discussions each cluster had had on the situation. For example, members of the cluster in OPT have **reacted individually as institutions**, while members decided that as a cluster any action would be inappropriate in the context.

This concern of appropriate action in a context regularly facing conflict situations was echoed with participants sharing a sense of wanting to show solidarity as Europeans and at the same time **not wanting to give the impression of caring only for European issues**. Questions raised – and remaining without unanimous and definite answer from the group – included: What can be our role as European institutions especially in the framework of our work in the MENA context constantly facing conflict? What impact do actions such as publishing a statement or demonstrating in front of an embassy have, and what meaningful actions could we as clusters undertake?

It was agreed that while all clusters and institutions remain autonomous in their decision to react or not, directives received from the EUNIC office on the stance the network is taking have been perceived as helpful guidance by colleagues in clusters. **The role of the network can be to share activities planned on this topic in the future.**

## Call to action: Direct opportunities in the year ahead

The final session gave participants an overview of funding opportunities open to EUNIC clusters, now and in the near future. The **Cluster Fund** is EUNIC's primary internal funding mechanism to **support the development of EUNIC clusters through joint collaborative projects**. Since 2012, 146 projects have been supported with a total budget of over 1,3 million euros. An overview of supported projects can be found here. The next call will open in September 2022 for projects to be implemented in 2023. General eligibility criteria and previous selection criteria can be found in the presentation.

European Spaces of Culture has launched its third Call for Ideas, which will be open until 19 June 2022. More information on the call can be found in the presentation and on the website. In its first two phases European Spaces of Culture has supported a total of 17 pilot projects. **The MENA region so far has not been represented among the selected pilot projects** and colleagues are strongly encouraged to turn the high regional potential into collaborative action that demonstrates and takes forward our joint work in cultural relations. Although the elaboration of project ideas and plans jointly indeed do take time and effort – as does forming a well-functioning partnership based on equity – and the financial contribution to receive if selected is relatively low, the administrative workload is limited and the aim is for all partners concerned to benefit from taking part in the Preparatory Action, besides implementing inspiring and meaningful projects. In addition, European Spaces of Culture provides a space to experiment in partnership and content. Co-funding is not required, but highly recommended. For any questions about the project, contact Robert via Robert.kieft@eunicglobal.eu.

Some of the clusters, including Algeria, Egypt, Rabat Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Israel, have also been contacted individually as they are eligible for the **EUNIC Special Call for Proposals 2022 Europe-Latin America**, initiated under the EUNIC presidency of AECID. Possible applications were discussed bilaterally.

## Cultural visit of MMAG foundation

The group visited Mohammad and Mahera Abu Ghazaleh Foundation, an independent foundation founded in 2017. The foundation provides a space for artistic research, production and critical discourse through its exhibition programme, educational projects, and residency spaces.

The visit allowed participants to explore the various spaces of the foundation, including artist studios, residency homes, exhibition and film screening spaces, a sound studio, a photography development atelier, and vast gardens, and to learn about its vision, history, and future projects.



## Reception at the Residence of the Belgian Ambassador

Together with colleagues from the EUNIC Jordan cluster and the EU Delegation in Amman, participants of the seminar were invited to a closing reception upon the generous invitation of the Belgian Ambassador to Jordan.

## Evaluation and feedback by participants

Based on an online form completed by 50% of the participants, the evaluation revealed an overall satisfaction with the regional cluster seminar with an average scoring of 4.6 out of 5 points. Especially the moderated panel discussion on Major EU funded projects was highly evaluated with 4.8 points average.

## Resources

All the presentations used during the seminar can be found on Google Drive:

- EUNIC PowerPoint presentation including information on the EUNIC network, EUNIC's strategic partnership with the EU and the EU's strategy for international cultural relations, EUNIC cluster governance models, partnership projects with EU Delegations in the MENA region and upcoming funding opportunities including the third Call for Ideas of European Spaces of Culture.
- Jordi Baltà's presentation of the Cultural Relations - Key Approaches in Fragile Contexts Report

## Other references

- EUNIC Cluster Guidelines: a practical and comprehensive handbook for colleagues working in clusters worldwide with all key information and relevant documents on cluster governance and management
- EUNIC-EEAS-EC Joint Guidelines: a practical framework to strengthen the partnership between the EU and EUNIC
- Joint Communication "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations", the baseline document that defines the principles and values of the EU's approach to international cultural relations.
- European Spaces of Culture information on the website
- Not a toolkit! Fair Collaboration in cultural relations: a reflAction, EUNIC commissioned practical tools and reflections on ethical questions underpinning collaboration in cultural relations
- Cultural Relations - Key Approaches in Fragile Contexts, EUNIC report by Jordi Baltà

## Participants

| Name | EUNIC cluster/Role | Organisation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Susanne Baumgart** | Rabat | Goethe-Institut |
| **Martin Daltry** | Occupied Palestinian Territories | British Council |
| **Antonia Grande** | Algeria | Italian Cultural Institute |
| **Laura Hartz** | Jordan | Goethe-Institut |
| **Andrea Jacob** | Tunisia | Goethe-Institut |
| **Sabine Kroissenbrunner** | Egypt | Austrian Cultural Forum |
| **Catherine Le Thomas** | Saudi Arabia | French Embassy |
| **Sabine Longin** | Qatar | French Embassy |
| **Arno Mitterdorfer** | Israel | Austrian Cultural Forum |
| **Gaëtan Pellan** | Casablanca | Institut français |
| **Summer Xia** | Jordan | British Council |
| **Romina Delia** | EUNIC Focal Point | Arts Council Malta |
| **Amalia de Lizaur López** | EUNIC Focal Point | AECID |
| **Sybilla Britani** | EUNIC Cluster Network Manager | EUNIC |
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