

Forum:

# Grantmaking for Culture and International Connection

30–31 Oct. 2023  
Timișoara



## Summary report

# 1

## Introduction

The event aimed to contribute to cultural operators' capacity to develop viable and sustainable project ideas and to support the professionalization and innovation in public funding for culture in the European context. The forum was co-organized by the Centre for Projects of the Municipality of Timișoara and the Romanian Creative Europe Desk hosted by the Ministry of Culture.

Through presentations and debates structured in 6 panels, more than 100 participants got acquainted with Creative Europe cooperation projects with Romanian partners and learned about the funding available at European level for cultural organisations and professionals. There were discussions about the impact of local and national public policies on funding practices and the status of cultural practitioners, as well as about capacity building programmes and international relations in the context of European Capitals of Culture.



# 2

## EU funding for culture

Strategic documents endorsed at political level are crucial for establishing a clear vision and a coherent and stable framework for the development of the cultural sector, underpinned by appropriate policies and funding. The panel highlighted the need to create synergies between culture and other areas such as education, tourism, urban policy, research and innovation, and to better link the cultural development directions at national and local levels.

The discussions were based on 3 strategic documents to be adopted by the Government: the National Strategy for Culture 2023-2030 and its related public policies, "Culture of the Future" and "Open Culture". The strategy focuses on increasing access to culture, on the transition to sustainable infrastructure and means of production and distribution, on funding and capacity-building support for cultural workers and the internationalisation of the Romanian cultural sector. The "Open Culture" policy identifies ways to guarantee access to culture for all, while "Culture of the Future" dwells on saving and making available the cultural heritage and contemporary creation in sustainable, inclusive and widely accessible ways in the context of new technologies. Once formally approved by the executive power, the current strategic approach would ensure continuity and predictability in terms of public support for culture over the next 7 years, with undeniable benefits for both the city and the national levels.

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## The challenges of correlating national and local public policies

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## Local and national support programmes for artists and other cultural practitioners

The panel looked at the impact and the challenges of several individual support programmes run by public and private organisations based in Timișoara, Cluj, Iași and Bucharest, namely: "Energy! Creative Fellowships" and "Power Station++ | Mobilities for Cultural Professionals" the Fund for Bilateral Relations (EEA grants), FILIT literary residencies, "Cluj in Residence" pilot-programme, and "At Two Owls" writer-in-residence programme.

The 6 support frameworks have different objectives and profiles, covering the entire cultural ecosystem (from creators to researchers, managers, communication and financial specialists and other occupations linked to technical or administrative support), i.e.: international mobility grants, residencies for artists, writers or translators, fellowships for artistic creation and cultural journalism. Most of them show flexibility concerning the outputs, which can be fully-fledged works, but also small unfinished parts of a larger creative process that continues beyond the residency time frame.

The plenary debates highlighted the need to multiply the good funding practices from Timisoara at national level, in particular the mobility programme and the support for cultural journalists. Recommendations to improve the latter called for funding objectives to address the need to improve writing skills for journalistic texts, which are often either standard and unappealing or simply too elitist for the wide audience and therefore fail to have a meaningful reach.

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## International relations via cultural mobilities and cooperation

Representatives of the cities of Veszprem (Hungary) and Elefsina (Greece), the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Timisoara City Hall discussed how cultural diplomacy is reflected at the local level, the principles involved in building mobility and cooperation programmes, as well as the role of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) action in promoting sustainable international relations and a common European space.

Cultural diplomacy goes beyond politics and promoting the image of a city or a country abroad, it means trustworthy inter-institutional relationships built up over time, but also human connections nourished in various international contexts and networks. The ECoC initiative best reflects the human dimension of diplomacy and its principles of dialogue, mutual respect, inclusiveness and adaptability to new socio-political and economic contexts worldwide.

The most effective ways to build genuine and sustainable international relations are through programmes that support individual mobility and transnational projects, as well as active participation in pan-European cultural networks and constant contact with cultural diplomacy actors (embassies, foreign cultural institutes in the country, etc.). International relations are about long-term strategic thinking, therefore the ECoC legacy should be reflected in the further collaboration between similar cities in the network, but also with other international partners having participated in this one-year transformative experience.

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## Case studies: Cultural cooperation projects funded by Creative Europe

The case studies with Romanian beneficiaries covered a variety of project types (small, medium or large-scale), roles (leader or partner) and cultural fields (textile arts, music, theatre, art and anthropology, urban regeneration and creative industries).

The speakers' experiences showed that the main challenges of participating in European projects are connected to securing the mandatory co-financing, the intercultural communication within the consortium team and the fair harmonisation of cultural labour costs in North-Western versus Central-Eastern Europe. The main recommendation for future applicants to the Culture Sub-programme of Creative Europe was to prioritise the quality of the transnational partnership, by choosing reliable partners with prior relevant expertise.



# 7

## International programmes for capacity building of the cultural scene

The organisations represented in the panel showcased several ways in which professional capacity can be strengthened through funding and other types of support. On the Move network organises working groups open to its members and mentoring programmes for cultural workers. The European Network of Cultural Centres facilitates staff exchanges between member cultural centres (*Lights on*) and the building and writing of European projects (*Incubator+*). The Goethe Institut runs the *Cultural Management Academy*, a programme with a theory-driven component, a project incubator, networking meetings and micro-grants for collaborative regional projects. The Timisoara Project Centre has supported the development of local cultural professionals and organisations through all of its funding programmes over the past 2 years.

The panel emphasised that organisations interested in supporting the professional development of culture practitioners should consider designing programmes that:

- are based on values such as freedom of artistic expression, accessibility and inclusiveness or environmental sustainability, and provide stability to the career advancement process for independent sector professionals, impacting their material and emotional well-being;
- support the deceleration of work and pressure in the cultural sector by creating safe spaces or "bubbles of calm", i.e. specific frameworks that grant professionals the luxury of time and distance from the stress of everyday work to reflect, tap into their resilience resources and reposition themselves if needed;



- go beyond providing hard skills and knowledge or concrete deliverables, be flexible and acknowledge the value of the process, of experimentation, meetings and exchanges between professionals as complementary sources of capacity building;
- create contexts for direct encounters between participants with different profiles, from the public and independent sectors, the entrepreneurial and non-profit sectors, etc;
- address, through distinct calls, all categories of practitioners, not only young people under 35, to avoid age discrimination and support lifelong learning and development at all career stages.





**Event rapporteur:** Bianca Floarea

The event is part of the **Power Station** programme, the component of the National Cultural programme "Timișoara – European Capital of Culture in 2023" dedicated to the development of capacities of the cultural sector and implemented by the Centre for Projects of the Timișoara Municipality.

**The Romanian Creative Europe Desk** promotes the Creative Europe Programme at national level, provides free technical assistance to operators who want to access this funding, helps to identify European partners for cooperation and promotes the funded projects. BEC Romania is hosted by the Project Management Unit of the Ministry of Culture and is part of the network of Creative Europe Desks in the participating countries.

**The Centre for Projects** is a public institution under the Timișoara City Council. It facilitates the community's access to resources and supports, from the city's budget, projects in the fields of culture, education, youth, civic involvement, sport and the environment that give life to a creative, dynamic and inclusive city. The Centre for Projects functions as the implementing body of the Municipality of Timișoara for the National Cultural Programme "Timișoara – European Capital of Culture in 2023".

**2023**  
Timișoara 2023  
European Capital of Culture



**Power  
Station**