



**PERFORMING
GENDER
DANCING
IN YOUR
SHOES**

Developing **audiences**

Transforming **lives**

Building **communities**

Performing Gender: Dancing in your Shoes

Recommendations for Cultural Policymakers

Performing Gender has been a series of European collaborative projects using the Performing Arts, and Dance in particular, to deepen understanding of questions around gender and sexual identity. The results have included greater innovation from artists, strengthened communities and excellent dance works.

The 2020-2023 edition, **Dancing In Your Shoes**, has explored how artistic processes can support community-building through genuine Co-Design between professional artists and target community members. The project has also shown that deep engagement with communities does not have to result in cultural works that are somehow 'less valuable' or 'less professional' than works authored by isolated choreographers. In fact, the project has shown that rigorous, innovative, and excellent works can result from this deep collaborative practice.

Through almost 10 years of Performing Gender projects, the consortium partners have developed expertise in what is needed to make projects of this kind really work. Here we share some of that information, as recommendations to arts funders and cultural policymakers – whether at a municipal, regional, national, or transnational level.

5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Dance as a cultural vehicle for a positive change in people lives

So many of the communities we have worked with carry their lived experience of marginalisation in their bodies - through gender-based violence, through sexual discrimination, through experiences of racism, homophobia or transphobia, through the aging body, or through disability.

Dance, if explored with sensitivity and experience, has the power to transform individual experience and to build stronger and happier communities.



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2. Working with communities needs time and resources

Collaborative relationship-building with an identified community needs to be supported outside of the usual cultural project-to-project timeframes. This work takes time, trust, and reflection. It also takes money!

Therefore, an appropriate budget and considered actions to support trust-building needs to be set aside outside of a project's artistic budget and framework.

3. Co-design with vulnerable communities is an expert cultural practice

This innovative working methodology requires knowledge and experience. We encourage policymakers to seek out excellent examples, but also to learn to recognise bad practice.

4. Historically, community engagement in cultural organisations has not been valued equally to artistic production.

Policymakers should encourage and support different hierarchical structures which will better encourage and value innovative, inclusive participation.

5. New evaluation methodologies and timelines are needed

Robust evaluation processes support both policymakers and the cultural sector to improve their decision-making. However, evaluation methodologies need to be flexible, adapted to ensure depth of impact is measured, and must allow long-term impact and change to be measured.

Recommendations regarding CREATIVE EUROPE EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

Multiply the opportunities to open a dialogue with the cultural sector.

The cultural sector is available to co-design with policymakers new evaluation criteria within the current Creative Europe programme and for Creative Europe beyond 2028.

We want to break the cycle of the evaluation burden which is placed *both* on policymakers and the cultural sector. Please bring the cultural sector in *now* so that we can support you. Together we can explore how the evaluation criteria can be more efficient and valuable to both funders and beneficiaries.



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- A. As we have learnt from *Performing Gender: Dancing In Your Shoes*, expertise in Co-Design leads to better outcomes for gender equity, LGBTQIA+ representation, people with disabilities and marginalised communities, and needs to inform current evaluation methodologies and those in subsequent Work Programmes.
- B. There needs to be more flexibility in terms of evaluating a Creative Europe project. The European Union needs to acknowledge place-based approaches vary due to local context, and we propose that there should be guiding evaluation principles which permit local adaptability.
- C. Please reduce bureaucracy. Cultural organisations want evaluation, but to evaluate is expensive and time consuming. We already collect and provide large amounts of data, sometimes having to submit data already submitted to another funder.

We are calling on the European Parliament to convene a **Data Reduction Taskforce** to map the data burden across all the key funding bodies with which cultural institutions engage, and to identify where it can be minimised. We hope through this it is identified where and how the outstanding burden might be reduced.

“When it is actually one group, like we are now, from 27 to 74 years old, we couldn’t be more different. But then in this creation with the addition of movement... This is the richness of this coexistence. It is unique.

“You are totally putting yourself in someone’s hands and you are receiving someone’s most intimate thoughts or actions. This binds the group together, and creates the notion of a group, you breathe the same in diversity.”

Vesna, 72, Slovenia



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