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Guidelines to support mobility of young artists and culture professionals

Ready Steady Go! is a 10-month capacity-building programme developed by Roberto Cimetta Fund, in partnership with Liv.in.g, Busart as well as Al Badil and Amuni. It includes two live workshops in Palermo (Italy) and Elefsina (Greece), as well as five virtual mobility sessions. The programme aims to enhance the mobility of young artists and culture professionals based in remote Mediterranean areas, such as islands, rural regions, and cities with fewer than 80,000 inhabitants. The project seeks to improve young participants' access to the labour market by fostering their engagement with the international cultural scene, largely considered a crucial aspect of career development. This document is based on feedback and insights gathered from participants and partners during the project. It offers recommendations for designing mobility funding and international support schemes targeted at young artists and culture professionals in remote Mediterranean areas.

MOBILITY: A TENTATIVE DEFINITION

Mobility is an essential component for artists and culture professionals to exchange ideas and practice, and to increase professional opportunities. Set as a human right by Article 13th of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, mobility is an essential component in the career path of artists and cultural actors (On the Move, 2018). It fosters fruitful exchanges, provides training and expands professional possibilities, and gives the opportunity to explore new narratives. Intended primarily as a temporary cross border mobility, it is the sine qua non condition that allows some artists to earn a living from their artistic or cultural work. However, the mobility of young artists and cultural operators based in the Mediterranean, particularly in remote areas, is constrained: they suffer from structural inequalities, such as few job and networking opportunities at home, and often lack the skills to enter the international scene. Mobility funders and players offering international support schemes miss opportunities to meet and exchange with young artists and cultural operators based in Mediterranean remote areas, which makes it challenging to design activities that meet their needs. Before COVID-19, cultural operators faced challenges such as inadequate travel infrastructure, scarce mobility funding, and political and economic barriers. The post-pandemic era demands a re-evaluation of modalities and approaches that take into account living, working, and travel practices, that emphasize digital transformations including new meeting formats, and that integrate the environmental dimension and climate change. Given that mobility significantly contributes to carbon emissions, there is a pressing need to redesign funding schemes and support initiatives that promote a more sustainable mobility plan. However, such schemes should consider disparities in transportation options and contexts between the so-called 'connected' areas and marginalised/remote areas, and propose tailored solutions: for cultural workers in the South and East Mediterranean, international mobility is especially difficult due to their reliance on air travel and inadequate infrastructures. Indeed, "green mobility" may be defined differently from a context-perspective and based on the profile of those going on mobility. Ready Steady Go! Participants have defined it in the Elefsina workshop as:

"... a concept about moving as well as attenuating the footprint on the planet, making it a good journey for the traveller and for the environment. It prioritises sustainability and environmental responsibility through methods that minimise carbon emissions, that involve relying on the digital to reduce paper consumption, and that take ethical and social issues into account...green mobility is a necessity for nature but it can come with associated costs and sometimes it can be expensive".

"Sustainable mobility is a paradigm that challenges the status-quo asking us to perceive the self in a relation of co-dependence, caring and responsibility [between] the human and non-human, the global and local environment".

"Green mobility means developing intersectional awareness related to the complexities of the contexts and beyond; to cooperate on priorities to impact the present in order to build a better future".

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are the result of insights gained during the implementation of the Ready Steady Go! project. They are by no means exhaustive and are based on the experience acquired through the project and through exchanges between partners and participants. They highlight some key priorities essential for players whose mission includes supporting young artists and cultural operators' mobility project, especially those living in remote areas. There is still much work to be done to guarantee a fairer and easier access to mobility to those who are generally excluded. One good place to start is to engage in active listening and understanding the context as a prerequisite for providing effective and creative solutions.

A. Provide access to information regarding mobility opportunities

Ensuring that information about opportunities and grants is well-disseminated and accessible no to a wide audience is critical for equitable participation. The following approaches can be applied:

Clarity/ transparency / inclusivity

- Publish clear eligibility criteria, deadlines, and application procedures for all grants and programmes.
- Provide multilingual resources to accommodate diverse participants, especially in regions where English is not widely spoken.
- Conduct preparatory or introductory webinars or training sessions to explain grant procedures.

Accessible Tools and Formats

- Create mobile-friendly, disability-accessible websites (e.g. screen-reader compatibility).
- Offer offline submission options or simplified forms for applicants who have no access to high-speed internet.

Dissemination

- Collaborate with local cultural hubs, embassies, and community centres to reach underserved areas.
- Use social media, newsletters, and public events that are popular in the target area to actively promote mobility opportunities.
- Identify and reach out to networks of emerging artists, culture professionals in underserved areas and marginalized communities.

B. Empowering artists and culture professionals to develop their mobility

Content and format / methodology Key observations and recommendations for creating impactful in-person workshops are outlined below:

- **Addressing attendance gap**
 - Identify who cannot attend on site workshops due to visa or other constraints and keep them informed and engaged through a hybrid scheme, offering live and/or recorded online sessions when possible, and sharing materials (photos, videos, etc.) through platforms like WhatsApp, email, or Drive.
 - To ensure an operational hybrid scheme, dedicate a person to

maintain engagement and/or adapt sessions to include with absent participants.

- **Effective Workshop format**

- Local context: Connect with the place where the workshop takes place through cultural sites visits and meetings with professionals to encourage networking and understanding of the locality

- **Working sessions**

- Schedule special sessions to support the development of participants' projects and address queries, doubts through regular feedback;
- Plan "nourishing" moments for inspiration and reflection to enhance creativity, while taking into account the time constraints professionals face in their work environment;
- Provide structured sessions to boost participants' skills and knowledge and promote group dynamics.

- **Cohesive group as key priority** Building a cohesive group is essential for the success of any collaborative programme:

- Encourage exchanges among participants to promote cultural knowledge-sharing and mutual learning.
- Take into account language difficulties and take measures to minimize them.
- Acknowledge the vulnerabilities and challenges participants confront in being part of a heterogeneous group, while taking into account the affinities that might emerge.
- Implement methodologies to create a safe space for exchanging about cultural differences, and fostering mutual understanding without conflict or discomfort.
- Address capacity-building through training or support from specialized personnel to accompany this process.

C. Physical and virtual mobility to build a community of practice

Applying a hybrid approach, combining live sessions and online meetings for regular interaction is key to improving performance. It fosters connections among participants and allows those who, for some

reason, cannot be mobile, to take part in a learning programme. At least two in-person gatherings are essential for a 6-month programme, as demonstrated in the Ready Steady Go! process. Some other recommendations are:

- Establish a digital space to share information and all sorts of relevant material (i.e. shared folders, WhatsApp) and strive to make this space dynamic.
- Provide training or resources for virtual collaboration tools (e.g., Miro, Zoom, or Google Workspace) to help sustain communication and cross-border creative efforts.
- Share information through updates about the programme, new mobility opportunities, and participants' achievements.
- Sustain a monitoring and feedback process: periodically check with the group to understand their needs, interests, and challenges in staying connected; based on their feedback, adapt the programme to enhance the group's support and sustained engagement.

D. A green mobility for everyone

Green mobility is a complex issue that shall be envisioned beyond transportation and the carbon footprint it leaves as a result. Professionals operating at the margins of Europe lack transport infrastructures, which contributes to limit their opportunities to travel. This is the case for many artists and professionals living in the Mediterranean and in localities poorly connected to cultural circuits. However, mobility is a right, and in the name of social justice, no one should be excluded, including artists and culture professionals from the Mediterranean who are operating in the cultural scene and who need to be empowered to better address environmental issues in their work in a region where climate change has already upset fragile ecosystems.

To support the participation of artists and professionals from remote areas, while aligning with green objectives, attention must be given to the following:

- Prioritize opportunities for underrepresented groups, including emerging artists, those from marginalized communities or regions with limited resources
- Acknowledge travel complexities and recognize that journeys from remote areas often involve multiple transport methods. In parallel,

ensure that green travel solutions do not cause undue stress or long, complicated journeys.

- Allow extra time for journey planning and engage in discussions with professionals living in remote areas to explore alternative travel options, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Consider travel time as working and paid time.
- Foster dialogue among participants, funders, and managers to produce appropriate travel solutions, such as shared vehicles, or hybrid formats that combine physical and virtual presence.
- Consider specific needs: take into account possible extra responsibilities, like caregiving, to ensure all participants can fully engage in the project on equal terms.

Each mobility is unique and needs to be addressed through tailored strategies and adaptive tools! Indeed, green mobility assessment should adopt a more comprehensive approach, taking into consideration each artists' profile and context.

E. Mitigate risks and difficulties: visas issues

Visa issues are a significant obstacle, perhaps the major one, to mobility for some culture professionals and artists living in some countries. Coordinating specific strategies in advance and in collaboration with funders or other institutions that foster cultural relations and exchanges is essential to address the visa issue as well as other challenges. The ineligibility of some countries for some Erasmus+ schemes set additional obstacles for some participants to take part in the project. In the end, despite multiple efforts, a couple of participants from Southern Mediterranean countries could not obtain their visas and could not attend the workshops.

While not fully satisfying in terms of securing equal opportunities, a Plan B must always be considered in advance to ensure the inclusion of individuals whose mobility is simply not possible: adapting contents, providing blended solutions or participatory tools and processes (such as those piloted in the RSG project) should enhance the accessibility of the programme, ensuring that no one is excluded or left behind due to circumstances beyond their control.