

ON
THE
MOVE

The Situation of At-risk and Displaced
Artists and Culture Professionals

Policy and Practice in the EU: Pathways, Impediments and Patchwork Solutions

Volume 2
Cultural Policy Analysis



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On the Move is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 80 members from 29 countries. Since 2002, On the Move provides regular, up-to-date and free information on mobility opportunities, conditions and funding, and advocates for the value of cross-border cultural mobility. Co-funded by the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture, On the Move is implementing an ambitious multi-annual programme to build the capacities of local, regional, national, European and international stakeholders for the sustainable development of our cultural ecosystems.

On the Move regularly commissions researchers to investigate different themes closely related to the network's activities and the work carried out by its members. Reflecting on transversal concerns and key areas of artistic and cultural mobility, the network tries to establish a clearer picture of the current movements and trends while formulating policy recommendations.

<http://on-the-move.org>

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Foreword

We are proud to unveil the second volume of our international research initiative, which delves into the circumstances faced by at-risk and displaced artists. This report provides an in-depth examination of the diverse initiatives, frameworks, and support mechanisms implemented by the national governments of the 27 European Union (EU) Member States, encompassing ministries of culture, arts councils, and other pertinent agencies, to aid these artists. The goal is to pinpoint effective strategies that embody the essence of the Council of the European Union's 2023 conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists, whether these strategies were shaped by the conclusions or existed beforehand.

This cultural policy analysis maps out existing support schemes, highlights success factors, and identifies gaps, thereby enabling support organisations and institutions to effectively monitor their programmes, share innovative solutions, and update policies and initiatives as required. Our heartfelt thanks go to researchers Elena Polivtseva and Franziska Stambke, the On the Move Advisory Committee, and all the organisations and individuals whose insights and experiences have paved the way for the solutions and advancements that are explored in the course of this research project.

The overarching aim of this research project is to identify policies and practices in Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, that support the active inclusion of displaced artists and culture professionals. Our ultimate objective is to propose operational instruments that specifically address the active inclusion and long-term support of displaced arts professionals.

On the Move has been particularly active in this area through the activities of its working group

on (en)forced mobility, which began in 2018. Led by international arts rights adviser Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg and founding director of alba KULTUR arts management Birgit Ellinghaus, this group has established connections across Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The concept of '(en)forced mobility' pertains to artists or culture professionals whose relocation is not entirely voluntary. This situation can arise from pursuing professional opportunities abroad, such as performances, exhibitions, residencies, or studies, but with underlying constraints. These individuals may have moved to escape censorship, persecution, armed conflict, natural disasters, human rights violations, extreme poverty, or other hardships that compelled them to leave their homes. Additionally, they may face restrictions that compel them to remain in a country due to temporary visa status, uncertainty regarding their civic status, denial of citizenship, asylum-seeking processes, refugee status (whether granted or not), the clandestine nature of their residence, or simply being categorised as migrants.

On the Move, following an initial proposal by Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg, has embarked on a year-long research process. This process is articulated around four main publications:

- The first publication, authored by Rana Yazaji and entitled *Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition (Volume 1: Scoping Review)*¹, was conceived as a scoping review of existing literature on the topic, including project reports, testimonies, guides, and toolkits.
- This publication is organised around an evaluation of existing cultural policy

1 Yazaji, R., *Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition, Volume 1 Scoping Review*, On the Move, 2025.

frameworks at both the EU and Member State levels, emphasising successful practices and identifying policy gaps.

- The third publication will consist of a large-scale data collection through online surveys, focus groups and interviews of at-risk and displaced arts workers, as well as organisations supporting them. This third report will also include an analysis of the OTM database entries addressing the situation of artists in exile. The publication is scheduled in July 2025.
- The fourth and final publication is envisaged to share operational instruments that would be used by policymakers, public and private

fundors, and other cultural stakeholders. It is planned for publication in November 2025.

We extend our gratitude to our initial supporters, including the European Union for co-funding our multiannual programme ‘New Solidarities’, the French Ministry of Culture, and CEC ArtsLink, which will host the presentation of all outcomes in New York City, in November 2025.

We invite you to join us on this journey as we work towards creating a more equitable and supportive environment for at-risk and displaced arts workers, ensuring their voices continue to enrich our cultural landscape.

Yohann Floch and Marie Le Sourd

Introduction

The goal of this study is to map and review existing tools, measures, schemes, and programmes developed and delivered by national governments of the 27 EU Member States, including ministries of culture, arts councils, and other relevant agencies, to aid at-risk and displaced artists. The objective is to identify effective models that embody the spirit of the 2023 ‘Council conclusions on supporting at-risk and displaced artists’², whether the models were directly influenced by these conclusions, whether they were inspired by them or whether they predated their adoption.

The methodology of this study involved reviewing key information sources from government agencies that support and promote culture at the national level across the 27 EU Member States. This included official websites, cultural policy documents, strategies, plans, reports, funding calls, press releases, and more. Additionally, the study examined the Quadrennial Reports on the implementation of the UNESCO 2005 Convention for the EU Member States, where these were available³.

The study focused on a diverse range of initiatives, funding tools, programmes, events, projects, and partnerships designed to support culture professionals based in or fleeing from countries affected by war, conflict, and other crises, or those facing threats due to their creative work, political activism or identity. The study encompassed interventions both directly initiated by government agencies and launched and managed by non-government actors with government support. The researchers did not draw a strict distinction between these two groups, as investigating the origins of the initiatives and the extent of government involvement was beyond the scope of this research. While not exhaustive, this study includes publicly available information that was accessible during the research process.

The research is primarily framed within cultural policy (although it occasionally draws on examples from other policy areas), with the scope being limited by the project’s timeframe and capacity. The researchers acknowledge, however, that support for displaced artists also falls under other government portfolios, including foreign affairs, education, migration, social affairs, and labour. Moreover, they are aware of the crucial role that city and regional policies play in this field, even if only limited attention to those is paid in the framework of this research. While all 27 Member States were included in the review, the study did not aim to provide an exhaustive account of each country but instead prioritised the diversity and relevance of available information.

Regarding key terms used in this document, the researchers have adopted the diverse definitions used by governments in their official discourse, including terms such as artist, displaced, migrant, refugee, and integration. While the researchers acknowledge the political implications some of these terms carry – including potential negative connotations – the primary goal was to provide a snapshot of national approaches, perspectives (including political discourse), and actions taken at the national level.

2 The Council of the European Union, ‘[Council Conclusions on at-risk artists and displaced artists \(2023/C 185/09\)](#)’ in *Official Journal of the European Union*, The Council of the European Union, 26 May 2023.

3 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Reports](#).

One of the key challenges encountered during the desk research was the uneven access to information across the 27 Member States; while some governments publish regular annual reports and updates online, others do not. Additional challenges included the need to process information from multiple languages (which was done by translating the content into English with the aid of online translation tools) and the limited research timeframe, which had to align with the smooth delivery of four reports within a one-year project timeframe.

Finally, it is important to note that since the actual needs of at-risk and displaced artists will be surveyed in the next stages of the project, the conclusions regarding policy assessments and gaps in this report remain partial. The researchers recognise that a more comprehensive and systematic review may be necessary in the future – within a larger research framework – to build upon and expand this report, as well as follow up on the progress of some of the initiatives reviewed as part of this research.

Eight key learning points

Drawing from the Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists in May 2023, as well as the analysis of tools, measures, schemes, and programmes developed and delivered by national governments of the 27 EU Member States, several critical insights emerge regarding the current state of support in EU Member States.

1. Availability and distribution of support

While numerous policies, programmes, and initiatives exist across EU Member States to assist at-risk and displaced artists fleeing war, repression, and other crises, significant gaps remain. Many national cultural ministries – including in the countries receiving high numbers of refugees – offer little to no targeted support within their cultural policies. Best practices in sustainability, inclusivity, and impact tend to be concentrated in a few states, while others provide only short-term aid or small-scale interventions. Many existing initiatives were developed as emergency responses and have since been

discontinued without replacement. While immediate support – such as residencies, safe spaces, and emergency grants – is crucial, there is a need to explore how ad hoc measures can transition into sustainable, long-term support. This could be achieved by integrating them into broader cultural policies and funding frameworks or by replacing them with other long-term and more effective alternatives. While a uniform EU-wide approach is challenging given the varying national contexts, there is potential for countries to learn from one another, adopt proven models, and jointly amplify existing good practices.

2. Barriers to accessing support

Some of the reviewed support programmes are not easily accessible by at-risk and displaced artists, excluding potential applicants based on their career stage, professional network, and financial stability. Some visa schemes and related work permits require applicants to be well-established and financially secure, potentially excluding emerging artists or those facing economic hardship. Likewise, certain grants and scholarships require proof of existing partnerships or confirmed agreements for showcasing funded

work in receiving countries, which are difficult conditions for newcomers unfamiliar with the local cultural landscape. While grants directed to local organisations to engage displaced artists can foster collaboration, they may also disadvantage those without prior connections or an international reputation. Best practices include integrating networking, matchmaking, and collaboration building into support packages rather than requiring pre-existing partnerships.

3. Ownership and origins of support mechanisms

EU Member States support various initiatives – some started by civil society and later funded by governments, others initiated by governments themselves, and some co-founded through public-private partnerships. While this research does not aim to assess their impact, sustainability, or relevance, it can be observed that initiatives that

involve civil society, consult the arts sector, and empower grassroots actors appear to be the most effective, advanced and enduring. Collaboration between governments and independent cultural organisations can enhance impact and efficiency, amplifying existing meaningful initiatives.

4. Geographic inclusivity

Several strong, state-backed initiatives addressing at-risk and displaced artists have been implemented across Europe without being limited to a specific country or region of origin of displaced artists, while many other recent programmes primarily target Ukrainian artists. While focusing on specific countries or

crises can prove effective and valuable, broader strategies must ensure inclusivity for artists from diverse backgrounds. Existing successful models developed for a particular crisis can be expanded or adapted to assist artists affected by other conflicts and emergencies worldwide.

5. Complementarity and a holistic approach

Both emergency relief and long-term career support are crucial for at-risk and displaced artists. Some programmes integrate elements of both within a single framework, offering financial aid, accommodation, psychological support, information access, networking platforms, cultural engagement opportunities, mentorship, training, employment, and presentation spaces. Platforms that centralise access to these

services or provide guidance on available support mechanisms are essential for navigating complex funding landscapes. Involving diverse stakeholders – including government agencies, diaspora communities, cultural institutions, displaced artists themselves and members of societies at large – can enhance efficiency and long-term impact.

6. The cross-border dimension

Supporting displaced artists effectively requires strong cross-border collaboration. This includes knowledge sharing, joint problem solving, and ensuring national policies complement one

another not only among different government portfolios, but also at a cross-border level. Artists naturally seek international exchange, collaboration, and creative dialogue, making

access to cross-border opportunities essential for artistic growth and professional development. Since artistic careers often transcend national boundaries, assistance programmes should provide them with the opportunity to engage with peers internationally; this international engagement is by necessity related to coordinating visa policies, which is beyond the scope of this report, but it also relates to

grants and scholarships supporting international projects. While some initiatives encourage cross-border cooperation between support organisations, relatively few programmes actively facilitate international work for displaced artists themselves. In general, there is a lack of political recognition, at both EU and national levels, of the importance of cross-border engagement in supporting refugee and at-risk artists.

7. Artists' voices

Cultural ministries of some EU Member States have shown interest in migration, refugee inclusion, and minority cultures, often positioning at-risk and displaced artists as mediators, cultural ambassadors, or storytellers in these fields. In some cases, it seems that state support for migrant artists is conditional on them playing such roles – whether documenting their experiences, aiding in community integration, or promoting national culture. While these functions align with the priorities of some migrant artists, it is essential to offer all displaced artists the same

creative freedom as any other culture professional. Meanwhile, large-scale initiatives focusing on understanding and researching the evolving needs of displaced artists themselves remain rare. Systematic, cross-border, and large-scale research, consultation, and dialogue are needed to integrate artists' perspectives into policy frameworks and support measures. Ensuring outreach to those who are not beneficiaries of state grants or connected to the local cultural scene is equally crucial.

8. Strategic leadership on artistic freedom

While emergency interventions for at-risk artists must be expanded, addressing the root causes of artistic repression and insecurity is equally important. The EU and its Member States could take a leading role in defending artistic freedom globally, advocating for safe environments for

creatives, developing training tools for rights protection, and emphasising the intrinsic value of arts and culture. Importantly, these priorities should be translated into concrete actions within the EU itself, beyond symbolic political statements.

The following sections will explore these eight key points in more detail.

Displacement and exile in EU cultural policy

Migration, particularly forced displacement, remains a critical issue in today's world, with each year setting new records for the number of people compelled to leave their homes. The reasons for forced displacement include wars, social unrest, human rights violations (including persecution), natural disasters, and economic hardship. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the key United Nations' Refugee Agency, the global number of forcibly displaced people had risen to an estimated 122.6 million by mid-2024, representing an 11.5% increase compared to 2023⁴. This trend is likely to continue into 2025, as the world remains destabilised by state fragility and violent conflicts, the number of which has nearly doubled over the past decade⁵.

Migration in the EU: the state of play and political perspectives

The EU receives a significant number of migrants, though figures vary across Member States. According to Eurostat data, over 3.7 million first residence permits were issued in the EU in 2023, compared to 3.6 million in 2022, surpassing pre-pandemic levels (3 million in 2019). In 2023, the most common reasons for issuing first residence permits were work (34%) and family (26%), followed by education (14%) and asylum (12%). Another 14% fell under 'other' reasons, including

residence-only permits, permits issued to victims of human trafficking, and unaccompanied minors⁶. In 2024, two EU Member States – Germany and Poland – were among the world's ten largest refugee-hosting countries, with Germany ranking third and Poland tenth⁷.

The top 10 nationalities of first residence permits issued in EU Member States in 2022 are presented on the graph below⁸.

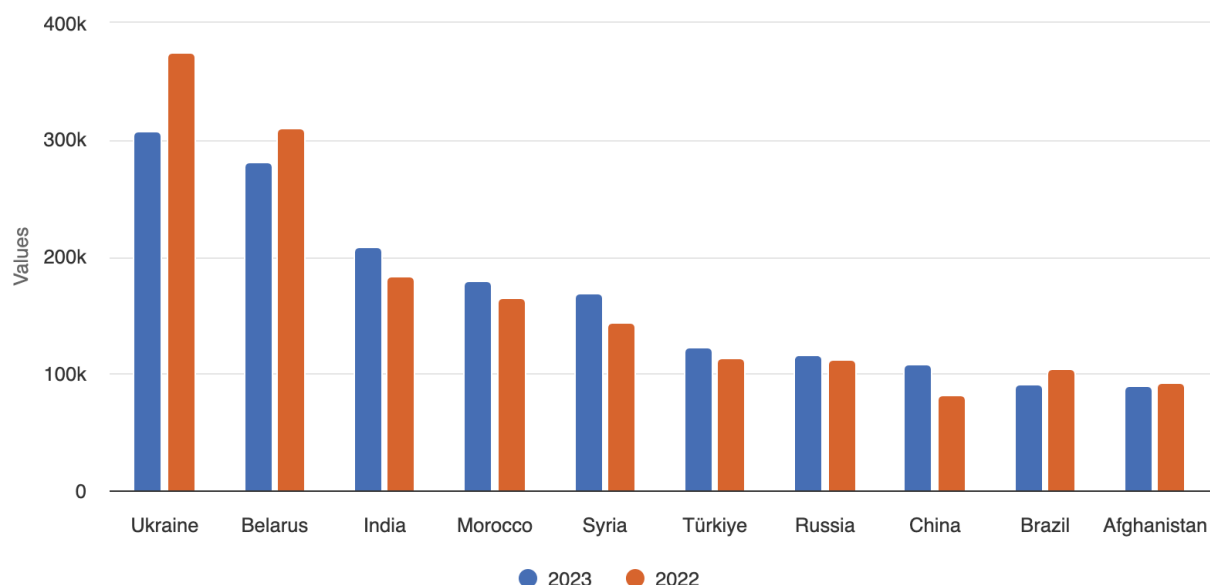
4 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Mid-Year Trends 2024](#), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024, p. 1.

5 Ibid., p. 11

6 European Commission, ['Statistics on migration to Europe'](#), 5 November 2024.

7 Statista, ['Ranking of the largest refugee-hosting countries as of mid-2024'](#),

8 European Commission, ['Statistics on migration to Europe'](#).



(Source: Eurostat)

Most people enter the EU legally through official border crossing points. However, as reported by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), for some of those fleeing war or persecution, the situation can be more complicated. Ukrainian nationals with biometric passports can enter the EU without a visa for up to 90 days within a 180-day period. In contrast, as FRA reports, individuals seeking international protection from conflicts outside the Russian war against Ukraine face limited legal pathways to reach safety in the EU, as many are unable to obtain travel documents or visas⁹.

The Ukrainian refugee crisis is the largest in Europe since World War II. Since Russia's invasion in February 2022, nearly a third of Ukraine's population has been displaced, either within the country or across borders. By October 2024, UNHCR reported 6.8 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide, with 6.3 million in Europe and 4.2 million in EU Member States¹⁰. It is important to note that at the end of 2021, the EU hosted less than 10% of the world's refugees, with an even smaller share of internally displaced persons.

However, by the end of 2022, the war in Ukraine significantly increased this figure, bringing the proportion of refugees in the EU to over 20%¹¹.

Some of the Ukrainian citizens arriving in Europe due to the full-scale war were registered under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive – which was extended until March 2025 – and others under similar national schemes. The Temporary Protection Directive, which was adopted in 2001, following the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, was triggered for the first time by the Council in response to the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022¹². The temporary protection mechanism offers immediate, collective protection to large groups of displaced persons in the EU who cannot return home. It eases pressure on national asylum systems by bypassing individual applications. Beneficiaries have EU-wide rights, including residence, work, housing, medical care, social welfare, and education for children. While the EU sets minimum protection standards, support levels may vary by country¹³.

9 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Fundamental Rights Report 2024*, 2024, p. 89.

10 International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), *ICMPD Migration Outlook 2025 – Ten migration issues to look out for in 2025: Origins, key events and priorities for Europe*, p. 33.

11 European Commission, *'Statistics on migration to Europe'*.

12 Goube, J., *'Ukraine's legacy: shaping Europe's future approach to refugees'*, Friends of Europe, 19 February 2024.

13 European Commission Migration and Home Affairs, *'Common European Asylum System, Temporary protection'*, n. d.

However, this mechanism has not been extended to nationals of other countries, despite Ukraine being just one of many sources of migration to Europe. In terms of asylum applications, the top five nationalities seeking protection in the EU in 2023 were Syrians, Afghans, Turks, Venezuelans, and Colombians. Between January and July 2024, the EU received approximately 589,900 asylum applications, including 540,300 first-time requests, a 2% decrease from 2023. The highest number of first-time applications were recorded in Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and Greece, while Cyprus, Greece, and Ireland saw the most applications relative to their population size. In 2023, EU countries granted protection to at least 409,500 people¹⁴.

The outlook for the EU's reception of forcibly displaced people in 2025 remains uncertain, just like the global situation in general. First, the trajectory of the war in Ukraine is still unpredictable. With the Temporary Protection for Ukrainian citizens set to end in 2026, in the coming year there might be efforts to develop a long-term EU-wide transition plan; key discussions could revolve around transitioning beneficiaries of Temporary Protection to other residence permits, facilitating circular migration, and establishing voluntary return programmes linked to reconstruction. Moreover, political changes in Syria could have significant repercussions for migration patterns from this country too. More broadly, with two billion people currently living in conflict-affected areas, Europe is likely to continue receiving large numbers of applications from people seeking refuge¹⁵.

In the meantime, the EU elections and some of the national elections over the last months and years have resulted in the shift to the political

right. The European Parliament is now more right leaning than ever before. In many cases, this political shift has led to stricter border controls, harsher migration policies, and an increased emphasis on national identity, often at the cost of global openness and cooperation.

In the EU's political discourse, a dual approach to migration has emerged. On the one hand, increasing attention has been given to restricting irregular migration, while on the other, there is a focus on improving the transition of those who have already arrived and settled in Europe towards being more included in the social and economic life in their receiving countries.

In the *Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024–2029*, the then European Commission Presidential candidate Ursula von der Leyen framed migration primarily as a security issue, with border control and return policies taking centre stage¹⁶. In 2025, the EU and its Member States will work on implementing the new Migration Pact, aiming to strengthen and align key policies on migration, asylum, border management, and integration. However, concerns were raised last year that the legislative package fell short in addressing irregular arrivals, leading to calls for additional measures, primarily focusing on the externalisation of asylum procedures and the creation of 'return hubs' in third countries¹⁷.

In the meantime, for those with legal status, the EU officially emphasises the importance of effective integration policies. The EU's *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027* states: 'It is [...] not only a moral duty in line with the EU's fundamental values, but also an economic imperative to step up action in promoting integration and inclusion'¹⁸. The

14 European Commission, '[Statistics on migration to Europe](#)'.

15 International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), *ICMPD Migration Outlook 2025 – Ten migration issues to look out for in 2025: Origins, key events and priorities for Europe*, pp. 3, 6, 7.

16 Von der Leyen, U., *Europe's Choice, Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024–2029*, 2024, p. 16.

17 International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), *ICMPD Migration Outlook 2025 – Ten migration issues to look out for in 2025: Origins, key events and priorities for Europe*, p. 5.

18 European Commission, '[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 \(COM/2020/758 final\)](#)', European Commission, 2020, p. 2.

plan highlights the potential economic benefits of fully integrating migrants into the labour market, including fiscal contributions, support for national pension schemes, and overall welfare gains. However, the plan also acknowledges that professional integration remains a challenge, as many migrants ‘are not able to put their skills to use’, and almost 40% are overqualified for the job they do¹⁹.

The Action Plan promotes several complementary approaches to migrant integration, including early action, long-term investment, and a shared responsibility between migrants and receiving communities. The emphasis on early action extends to pre-departure integration measures, such as training and orientation courses, which are linked to post-arrival support for both migrants and their host communities. These measures are designed to be implemented as early as possible to facilitate a smoother transition.

The Action Plan also acknowledges that the inclusion of newcomers is a long-term and ongoing process requiring mainstream policies that foster ‘meaningful participation’. These policies can lead to initiatives aimed to help migrants unlock and utilise their existing skills, including through systems for recognising qualifications, gaining visibility in the labour market, and accessing upskilling and reskilling opportunities, including non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Supporting migrant entrepreneurship is highlighted as another key pathway to navigating labour markets in new countries.

Regarding the principle of shared responsibility, the Action Plan advocates for a holistic approach in which both migrants and host communities

– including public authorities and institutions, social and economic partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector – are supported and empowered. Beyond professional integration, it promotes the active participation of migrants and citizens with a migrant background in consultative and decision-making processes at local, regional, national, and European levels. It also encourages initiatives to enhance interaction between migrants, EU citizens with a migrant background, and local communities through art, culture, sports, and social life. Finally, it underscores the importance of informing Europeans about integration and migration to foster a more inclusive society.

The EU is also committed to becoming a Union of Equality, ‘a continent where you can be who you are’ and ‘where you can aim as high as you want’, as von der Leyen stated in her 2023 State of the Union address²⁰. One of the key tools for achieving this ambition is the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025, which seeks to combat racism and discrimination by funding initiatives in employment, education, healthcare, and housing, addressing racial stereotypes through media and civil society, and encouraging Member States to take measures to counter disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic discrimination²¹.

While these frameworks recognise culture and the arts as instruments of inclusion, a crucial question remains: where do at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals fit within the EU’s broader ambitions to help newcomers, provide them with comprehensive support, and amplify their voices (free from stereotypes and discrimination based on origin and nationality)?

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Von der Leyen, U., ‘[State of the Union address](#)’, European Commission, 13 September 2023.

²¹ European Commission ‘[Building a Union of Equality](#)’, *Equality and inclusion*, n. d.

At-risk and displaced artists in the EU cultural policy

With limited competence in the field of culture, the EU relies on key instruments such as the Work Plan for Culture and programmes supporting culture, including Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ among others. The EU's broader political discourse on culture is also shaped by statements and reports from the European Parliament, as well as conclusions from the Council of the EU. A review of these documents indicates that the issue of at-risk and displaced artists is not a prominent focus within either the EU's integration and equality agendas or its cultural policy actions and discourse.

Work Plan for Culture

The EU's four-year Work Plan for Culture sets the priorities for EU cooperation on culture and outlines key actions for implementing these priorities. The current edition, which spans the period 2023–2026²², is the only Work Plan that has addressed the issues of displaced or at-risk artists.

This current Work Plan focuses on four complementary priorities: empowering artists and culture professionals (1), enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society (2), unleashing the power of culture for the planet (3) and strengthening the cultural dimension of the EU's external relations through co-creative partnerships (4). It sets out 21 actions addressing key issues, such as improving working conditions for artists, promoting culture's role in health and well-being, enhancing access to culture, fostering cultural participation and democracy, recognising the role of libraries, supporting green and digital transitions in the cultural sector, addressing the

links between culture, heritage, and climate change, advancing quality built environments, and strengthening international cultural relations (including support for Ukraine).

The focus on Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors is part of a specific sub-topic of the key priority focusing on the EU's external relations. This focus emphasises the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage and, more broadly, the improved resilience of the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors and their capacity to sustain a vibrant arts and culture scene, which must occur in the 'spirit of co-creation'. The Work Plan does not specify whether support will be directed towards displaced Ukrainian artists, those remaining in Ukraine, or both. The target outputs for this priority include assessing possible joint measures, synergies, and best practices for the preservation, protection, and reconstruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage and institutions, as well as supporting Ukrainian cultural and creative actors.

Another relevant sub-topic within the same thematic priority is framed as 'The role of culture and culture professionals in the promotion and defence of democracy and human rights in fragile contexts'²³. This area addresses global issues related to democracy, human rights, artistic freedom, and cultural rights. A possible course of action set there is to explore more focused and systematic support, 'taking into account the implications of the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the European Parliament in this field'. The output is intended to be a comprehensive overview of the situations and needs of cultural human rights defenders²⁴.

22 Council of the European Union, '[Council resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026](#)', *Official Journal of the European Union*, 7 December 2022.

23 Ibid., p. 10.

24 Ibid.

Creative Europe

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU has implemented tailor-made tools targeting Ukrainian professionals while also integrating Ukraine-related priorities into some existing frameworks. These schemes cover a broad range of priorities and provide support to creative workers based in Ukraine as well as those residing in other Creative Europe countries, with activities ranging from art creation and peer-to-peer learning to networking, capacity-building, and the dissemination of Ukrainian culture. However, none of these or similar EU tools or programmes specifically target cultural workers who are nationals or residents of other countries affected by war, conflict, or human rights violations.

Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, the EU's support for Ukrainian culture professionals has been provided through Creative Europe, the Union's main programme for financing cultural and creative sectors across 40 eligible countries, including all 27 EU Member States. In response to the war, in 2022 the European Commission launched an open call to support Ukrainian artists outside Ukraine, cultural organisations within the country, and preparations for the post-war recovery of Ukraine's cultural and creative sector in the medium term. This call was repeated in 2024, with a focus on three areas: assisting Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations in co-creating with peers and showcasing their work both in Ukraine and other Creative Europe countries; fostering access to culture and cultural heritage for displaced Ukrainians; and contributing to the post-war recovery of Ukraine's cultural and creative sectors through capacity-building and networking activities²⁵. The 2025 call will address the same priorities and it will fund projects

organised in partnerships that include at least one Ukrainian organisation and one organisation from another Creative Europe country. Creative Europe's co-financing rate will be set at 90% and projects will have a maximum duration of three years to 'deliver results quickly'²⁶.

Beyond this special call targeting Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors and professionals, other tools of Creative Europe, such as cooperation projects, networks, and platforms, encouraged applicants to consider the consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine as much as possible in their proposals. Moreover, Ukrainian cultural workers were able to visit 23 Creative Europe countries professionally, thanks to the support of Culture Moves Europe, a flagship mobility initiative of the Creative Europe programme. During the first year of implementation of the mobility action, a total of 109 people based in Ukraine and 132 Ukrainian nationals based in other countries were supported²⁷.

Among other EU actions – both related to Creative Europe and not – support tools available for Ukrainian professionals and organisations (due to Ukraine being one of the 40 Creative Europe countries) include the New European Bauhaus, support for literary translation and book circulation, funding for performing arts touring projects under the Perform Europe scheme, Music Moves Europe and Europa Nostra Awards, and more²⁸.

While other countries affected by wars are not specifically targeted by a tailor-made Creative Europe call, beneficiaries of Creative Europe can utilise these funds to address issues of displacement, exile, refuge, and migration and include voices of at-risk and displaced artists, as well as provide direct support for them. Some

25 See European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, [Supporting Ukraine's arts and culture – EU values and solidarity at work](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

26 European Commission, [2025 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme](#) C(2024)6503, 18 September 2024, p. 30.

27 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, [Supporting Ukraine's arts and culture – EU values and solidarity at work](#), p. 10.

28 Ibid., pp. 10–12.

networks and platforms supported by the Creative Europe programme embed voices of at-risk and displaced artists in their public events, conduct research about their needs and situation, and advocate for more inclusive policies.

One of Creative Europe-supported initiatives is RAWABET²⁹, a collaborative programme co-funded by the Swedish Arts Council. RAWABET seeks to empower the contribution of Arab artists in European cultural scenes, ease their access to new cultural spaces and audiences, support the production of Arab-led projects in performing, musical, and multimedia arts, and revitalise narratives about the role of arts and culture in European societies. In the framework of RAWABET's call launched in 2025, performing artists (theatre, dance, new circus, and more) from the Arab region who arrived in Europe after

2015 are invited to apply for a 10-day residency, including peer-learning, collective workshops, and project development, with the opportunity to showcase their work.

Another example of a project co-funded by the Creative Europe programme is the IN EX(ILE) LAB project of the French organisation Agency of artists in exile (read more about in [Box 1](#)). The project was launched in 2023, aimed at artists in exile based in Cyprus, France, Italy or Portugal, who have developed (or wish to develop) an artistic practice around performance art. IN EX(ILE) LAB provides exiled artists with 'the opportunity to create a performance, build a professional network, benefit from accompaniment by established artists based in Europe, and conquer new audiences in the European space'³⁰.

Box 1 - Atelier des artistes en exil

Founded in 2017, the agency of artists in exile identifies artists in exile across all disciplines, supports them based on their needs, provides workspace, and connects them with professionals to help them rebuild their careers³¹. aa-e organisation offers artists in exile of all origins and disciplines workspace and connects them with professionals through French and European networks. Moreover, aa-e organises its own events, such as the 'Party in Exile' and the multidisciplinary festival 'Visions of Exile'. More than 50 partners, such as the French Ministry of Culture, the EU, city and regional entities, private foundations, and other types of organisations, support aa-e.

Beyond providing meeting and working spaces, aa-e is also an essential information hub. In response to Russia's war against Ukraine, it set up emergency telephone lines in 2022 to assist artists with administrative questions and housing requests. Within the first year of the war, nearly 1,300 people benefited from this support³².

29 Transversal project, '[RAWABET: Open call for Performing Artists-in-Residence \[Malmö/Sweden\]](#)', n. d.

30 Agency of artists in exile, '[Open call IN EX\(ILE\) LAB](#)', n. d.

31 [Atelier des artistes en exil \(aa-e\)](#) [Agency of artists in exile].

32 Ministère de la Culture, '[Solidarité Ukraine : la mobilisation entre dans une nouvelle phase](#)' ['Ukraine Solidarity: Mobilisation Enters a New Phase'], 23 February 2023.

Finally, a number of projects funded under the Perform Europe scheme³³ tackle the issues of migration, identity and borders. These projects, such as Embedded Temporalities, give visibility and recognition to artistic works of minorities as well as a broad range of issues relevant to identity, non-normativity, participation, class struggles, migration, and local and European border policies³⁴.

Artists' status and working conditions

In recent years, the focus of the cultural policy discourse championed by EU institutions has notably embraced the concerns about artists' status and socio-economic conditions. This shift was a direct outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed multiple structural deficiencies in protection systems for artists and led to significant talent drain in the cultural and creative sectors. While many legal and policy measures were discussed, developed, and implemented at the level of national governments, this theme was also present at the EU level.

The issue was prioritised in the Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022³⁵, paving the way for the Member States' experts group Open Method of Coordination³⁶, which produced the report *The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals*. The report acknowledges the hardships faced by artists

from Ukraine and other countries dealing with 'difficult political circumstances'. Although there is no specific focus on legal and policy measures related to the support of displaced or at-risk artists, the authors express hope that the report will be useful 'to the Ukrainian and other authorities and serve as guidance in improving the status of artists in Ukraine and the recovery of its cultural sector, as well as to countries that have to cope with displaced or at-risk artists'³⁷.

At-risk and displaced artists are also mentioned in the report's chapter on artistic freedom, though without concrete recommendations on how their status can be improved in receiving countries or how these artists can be better supported by EU Member States in their countries of origin or non-EU countries to where they relocate. Instead, the report advises supporting civil society organisations working to protect the right to freedom of artistic expression internationally, such as the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) (read more in [Box 2](#)), Freemuse, Artists at Risk Connection, Index on Censorship, and Arterial Network. Lastly, the report, albeit vaguely, addresses the issue of equal access to support, stating that 'opportunities for funding or access to public goods should not be hindered by linguistic, technological, cultural and social barriers', and calls for Member States to pay special attention to 'migrants and ethnic minorities as well as other types of minorities, such as LGBTQIA+ or disabled persons'³⁸.

33 Perform Europe is a scheme for the European performing arts sector, co-funded by Creative Europe, which facilitates international networking and supports inclusive, diverse, and green touring projects across the 40 Creative Europe countries. Learn more [here](#).

34 IETM, '[Embodied Temporalities](#)', *Perform Europe Stories*, n. d.

35 Council of the European Union, [Council resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022](#), Official Journal of the European Union, 21 December 2018.

36 See the definition provided by the EU: 'The open method of coordination (OMC) in the European Union can be described as a form of "soft" law. It is an intergovernmental policy-making approach that does not produce binding EU legislative measures and does not require Member States to introduce or amend their laws.' In EUR-Lex: Summaries of EU legislation, '[Open method of communication](#)', n. d.

37 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, [The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals – Report of the OMC \(Open Method of Coordination\) group of EU Member States' experts](#), Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, p. 7.

38 Ibid., p. 90.

Box 2 - International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)

ICORN is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2006. As part of a global network of cities dedicated to protecting human rights and those who defend them, ICORN offers two-year relocation and residency programmes for writers, journalists, and artists at risk who cannot safely continue their work in their home countries or regions.

ICORN residencies provide a safe environment where displaced artists can find respite and continue their work while gaining access to relevant professional and social networks. Each City of Refuge operates the ICORN programme independently, in collaboration with and with support from the ICORN Secretariat. The funding and management of ICORN Cities of Refuge vary depending on national and local legislation, regulations, partnerships, cultural policies, and available funding opportunities. Cities in several EU Member States – including Germany, Sweden, Poland, France, Slovakia, Finland, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands – have joined ICORN, demonstrating a commitment to supporting artists at risk.

Another strand of political action at the EU level related to artists' working conditions was initiated by the European Parliament. Between 2020 and 2023, the European Parliament issued three key resolutions addressing artists' status and working conditions: one on the cultural recovery of Europe³⁹, one on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU⁴⁰, and the most recent one on the EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors⁴¹.

All three resolutions aspire to put forward a comprehensive approach to improving working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors, encompassing measures in various fields, such as social security, taxation, remuneration, copyright, funding for culture, education and capacity-building, and more. Issues related to inclusion, equality, cultural diversity and non-discrimination, as well as protection of artistic freedom, are addressed in different ways across all three initiatives.

However, a specific focus on at-risk and displaced artists is lacking in the discourse of the first two resolutions, and the reference to this matter in the 2023 document, even if specifically related to the topic, does not propose any innovative or ambitious solutions; they merely invite 'the Commission and the EEAS to consolidate and expand measures, as appropriate, to support artists and other CCS professionals at risk, especially as a consequence of war or geopolitical instability, in upholding their freedom of artistic expression'⁴². Nonetheless, this reference is important as it could potentially elevate these issues on the agenda of the EU or national governments.

Furthermore, the European Parliament 2021 resolution recognises that artists and culture professionals from racial, ethnic, and geographic minorities (grouped under the term 'professionals from marginalised groups', alongside those with vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals) face fewer professional opportunities and have less access to sustainable careers in culture and the

39 [European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the cultural recovery of Europe](#) (2020/2708(RSP)).

40 [European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU](#) (2020/2261(INI)).

41 [European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors](#) (2023/2051(INL)).

42 Ibid., art. 59.

arts⁴³. A similar point is made in the 2023 resolution regarding ‘professionals from disadvantaged groups’, which includes, among others, ‘people from ethnic and geographic minorities or those with different residency status’⁴⁴. When it comes to concrete proposals for action, the focus is on providing equal support and protection to all culture professionals. For example, the 2021 policy document underscores the need to use the Recovery and Resilience Facility for culture fairly, deploying ‘measures which are accessible to all, leaving no one behind’⁴⁵, while the 2023 resolution calls on the Commission and Member States to strengthen existing incentives or create new structures to ensure ‘equal opportunities in careers, particularly for women, LGBTQIA+, persons from disadvantaged backgrounds, and minorities, including, when appropriate, through funding mechanisms’⁴⁶.

The official response of the European Commission, published in early 2024, features commitments to keep the issue of artists’ working conditions high on its agenda, further investigate policy and legislative gaps, and explore the possibility of introducing social conditionality of EU funding for culture (enhancing exchange of information between Member States), among other measures⁴⁷. However, support for at-risk artists is not referenced in the response, nor is there attention given to the issues of equity and inclusion, or artistic freedom (the larger themes, typically related to or associated with the situation of at-risk and displaced artists).

Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists

The ‘Council conclusions on at-risk artists and displaced artists’⁴⁸ is a unique political document at the EU level entirely dedicated to exile and displacement in the cultural sector. Adopted by the EU Ministers for Culture under the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, they are driven by a strong sense of support for Ukraine while also conveying solidarity with all exiled and at-risk artists from any context, including Russian and Belarusian artists opposing regimes in their countries. The main strength of the document is that it insists that artists should be offered protection against threats and violations that endanger them because of their artistic work. It acknowledges that this protection is imperative due to the vital role art and culture play in democracy and in the resilience of societies and individuals. Moreover, the conclusions specify that exiled artists play an important role – both current and historical – in times of turbulence; they promote ‘peace, mutual understanding, freedom, democracy and cultural diversity’. In this regard, it is stated that artists must be given the opportunity to pursue their professional practice ‘to continue to bear witness to ongoing events’⁴⁹.

A key element of the conclusions is the call for a holistic approach to supporting exiled and at-risk artists, combining first-line and urgent measures with long-term frameworks to help professionals become full-fledged members of their new communities by ensuring access to culture and the right to professional self-realisation.

43 [European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU](#) (2020/2261(INI)), art. P.

44 [European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors](#) (2023/2051(INL)), art. P.

45 [European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU](#) (2020/2261(INI)), art. 36.

46 [European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors](#) (2023/2051(INL)), art. 52.

47 European Commission: [Letter from Executive Vice-President Maros Sefcovič to President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola](#), 21 February 2024.

48 The Council of the European Union, ‘[Council conclusions on at-risk artists and displaced artists](#)’ in *Official Journal of the European Union*, 26 May 2023.

49 Ibid., art. 10.

As the conclusions states: ‘consider applying a long-term and holistic approach when welcoming at-risk and displaced artists and their families, complementing the urgent need for a safe haven with possibilities to become a part of the local community and cultural life and to remain artistically active and heard, and encouraging the learning of the host country’s language’⁵⁰.

The first-line response outlined in the conclusions includes offering safe havens and establishing so-called ‘cities of refuge’ for at-risk and displaced artists from different parts of the world, as well as adapting regular artistic residencies into emergency residencies to meet their specific needs. In terms of long-term support aimed at helping beneficiaries build sustainable careers, the emphasis is placed on providing networking opportunities and ensuring continuous government support.

It is also recommended that further support for Ukrainian artists and organisations be conducted in dialogue with Ukrainian partners. More broadly, the conclusions promote an understanding of the specific needs of exiled and at-risk artists. The document highlights the importance of networking, as well as the exchange of information, best practices, and experiences between Member States and non-state actors supporting at-risk and displaced artists. Moreover, it promotes cross-sectoral and transnational policy cooperation on artistic freedom.

In summary, the conclusions champion the following key axes of action:

- Geographic inclusivity: while the document is closely linked to the ongoing war in Ukraine, and Ukrainian artists and culture professionals are referenced in several paragraphs, the conclusions are intended to include artists from other parts of the world.
- Addressing both short- and long-term needs: both emergency and first-line assistance and long-term support are equally valued and promoted as part of a comprehensive strategy.
- A holistic approach: a comprehensive support package is promoted, including supporting artists to stay active in their profession, enabling their voices to be heard, and engaging with the culture of their receiving communities.
- Informed decision-making: supporting actions should be based on proven needs and be developed in dialogue with professionals and organisations from the country of origin.
- A preventive approach: the promotion and defence of artistic freedom globally is prioritised.
- Cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration: strengthening cooperation between governments and between governments and civil society is promoted.

These key axes of action will be analysed through the examples presented in the following section.

Specifically, the following section asks: Are first-line measures to support refugee artists in place and effective? Do displaced artists have opportunities to transition from the status of an ‘exiled artist’ to becoming full-fledged members of the local professional community? Are their voices heard as professionals and members of society, rather than merely as representatives of a refugee community (with the stereotypes and assumptive framings this entails)? Are the needs of displaced artists continuously studied and understood? Finally, is the landscape of policy measures sustainable and does it ensure a certain amount of stability for beneficiaries?

⁵⁰ Ibid., art. 16.

National cultural policies across the EU: Public discourses

This section maps and analyses policy and investment measures implemented by ministries of culture, arts councils, and other cultural agencies across all EU Member States to support at-risk and displaced artists. Focusing on national cultural policies enables the examination of how governments perceive and support displaced artists specifically as culture professionals – art workers, sector members, and contributors to the cultural life of their countries. This approach aligns with the traditional responsibilities of cultural ministries, which, despite national differences, generally encompass heritage protection, artistic creation, and democratisation of cultural access, all within the broader framework of social and political priorities⁵¹.

Before delving into concrete actions and instruments implemented at the national level to support at-risk and displaced artists, it is essential to provide a snapshot of how displacement, exile, and migration are embedded in the broader political discourse of government agencies and departments dealing with culture. This overview helps to identify the political motivations behind government policies and support measures, as well as potential gaps between rhetoric and

actual implementation, which will be explored in the subsequent sections of the report. The key discourse threads identified and explored here below include universal access to culture, art as a tool for raising public awareness about migration, inclusion through culture, the specific needs of displaced artists, state-level solidarity with victims of war and human rights violations, and cultural diplomacy.

Culture for all

Migrants, whether artists or professionals in other fields, are often the focus of broader government strategies on cultural access and cultural rights. The vast majority of EU Member States emphasise access to culture for all in their official cultural policies, strategies, and visions; Malta and Cyprus, for example, have developed strategies for cultural rights that recognise every citizen's right to engage with culture. While these

strategies rarely refer explicitly to displaced and at-risk artists, some general references do exist. For instance, Arts Council Malta adopted a Right to Culture vision aimed at expanding opportunities for people to engage in creative activities, with the goal of raising awareness about inclusivity and embedding cultural rights into the Council's daily practice⁵². The *Right to Culture Resource Pack* developed by the Arts Council as part of

51 Caron, B., [Cultuurbeleid en ideologie – Kan je het cultuurbeleid politiekideologisch typeren?](#) [Cultural Policy and Ideology – Can cultural policy be characterised in political-ideological terms?], University of Antwerp, 2024, pp. 27–29.

52 Arts Council Malta, 'Right to Culture', [General resources, toolkits and templates](#), n. d.

implementing this vision acknowledges the important role of at-risk cultural rights defenders in promoting cultural rights and calls for their support through cultural policies⁵³.

In many national strategies, migrants and refugees are grouped with other minority or vulnerable groups, with a view of promoting their access to culture. For example, in its Declaration of Cultural Rights, the government of Cyprus commits to ensuring ‘that everyone has the right to take part in the cultural life both of the society and their own communities’ and places particular emphasis on the cultural rights of all ‘marginalised and vulnerable individuals’, including not only migrants and refugees, but also women, LGBTQIA+ persons, indigenous peoples, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities, children, and older persons⁵⁴.

A focus on ‘culture for all’ is reflected in support instruments in different ways. For instance, in Portugal, the Directorate-General for the Arts delivered its Partnership Support Programme – Interculturality⁵⁵ – as part of its agreement with the High Commissioner for Migration. This support programme aimed to foster artistic projects that combat racism, ethnic discrimination, and xenophobia, addressing multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination while promoting diversity and citizenship values. It also seeks to encourage the participation of artists across various artistic fields and from diverse backgrounds, including Portuguese Roma communities, immigrants and their descendants, and refugees.

The idea of ‘culture for all’ remains, in many cases, quite vague; in some cases it refers only to the participation of certain groups in the country’s culture, and in other cases it also explicitly

includes the right and opportunity to actively create culture. For instance, Ireland’s Culture 2025 strategy recognises ‘the right of people to access, participate in and shape our culture’⁵⁶, while Estonia’s Culture Development Plan 2021–2030 states: ‘One of the most important tasks of the state is to ensure that all Estonian residents have the opportunity to participate in the cultural activities and creative fields they are interested in, both as engaged spectators and as creators’⁵⁷.

‘Culture for all’ also raises the question of the legal status of those within a country’s borders. For example, the embrace of residents (not only citizens) is reflected in several strategies, such as that of Latvia’s Ministry of Culture, which commits to meeting the cultural needs of both citizens and residents of the country⁵⁸. In contrast, in some cases policies and support measures explicitly target the country’s citizens. For instance, in the Netherlands, the Fund for Cultural Participation, one of the National Cultural Funds of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, is rather specific about its target audience: ‘We aim to give as many Dutch people as possible access to participation in arts and culture by contributing to a resilient, adaptable, and future-proof sector’⁵⁹.

In the overwhelming majority of national cultural policy documents, this distinction is not made explicitly, with more general references to the right to culture for ‘everyone’, sometimes with an emphasis on ‘vulnerable groups’. However, even when such a distinction is not explicitly stated, being a citizen or holding a residency permit is often an eligibility criterion for funding. For example, in Malta, having Maltese nationality or a residency permit is a requirement to apply for the Arts Support Scheme Thematic Call: Right to Culture⁶⁰.

53 Arts Council Malta, [Right to Culture – Resource Pack](#), 2022, p. 98.

54 Deputy of Culture, Republic of Cyprus, [MED9 Declaration on Cultural Rights](#), 2024, art. 11.

55 Directorate-General for the Arts (DGARTES): [Partnership support programme, ‘Interculturality’](#), n. d.

56 Government of Ireland, [Culture 2025 – A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025](#), 2020, p. 10.

57 Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Culture: [‘Culture development plan 2021–2030’](#), 2 June 2023.

58 Legislation of the Republic of Latvia, [Cultural Policy Guidelines for 2022–2027 “Cultural State”](#), 1 March 2022.

59 The Cultural Participation Fund, [Culture Makes a Difference – Policy Plan 2025–2028](#), January 2024, p. 6.

60 Arts Council Malta, [Arts Support Scheme Thematic call: Right to Culture Guidelines and Regulations 2024](#), 2024, p. 6.

Better understanding migration and exile

Many ministries of culture contribute to raising citizens' awareness about the issues related to migration and exile. This is typically done by funding and promoting artistic projects, exhibitions, talks, and festivals that address these topics, often involving migrant and refugee communities both as creators and audiences. For instance, the exhibition *Face Forward...into my home*, organised by European Capital of Culture candidate city Nicosia 2030, together with refugees and migrants who were forced to leave their homelands and rebuild their lives in Cyprus, included experiential workshops and a photography exhibition presenting the participants' portraits alongside their stories⁶¹. The initiative was part of the Parallel Programme of the 5th edition of the Nicosia International Festival, co-organised with the EMΣT | National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens and supported by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Cyprus.

Another example is the festival *Voices of Migration*, organised by ARHA+⁶² and financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Capital City of Prague, and Prague 1. The goal of the festival was to break stereotypes and present migration as a natural part of society, serving as a 'living platform where people with direct

migration experiences come together to share their stories'.

These two projects are among many examples supported by ministries of culture in recent years. Such initiatives target both migrants and receiving communities and are typically organised on a one-off basis, reflecting emerging interests and priorities in the art field and beyond. The aim is generally to give voice to migrants and refugees, to hear their stories, and to influence public opinion on issues of migration and exile.

A less common yet equally important focus is on the readiness and receptiveness of local communities to welcome migrants. To raise this issue, the Finnish Centre of Expertise on Integration of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment published a blog post⁶³ highlighting the importance of societal receptivity in the successful integration of immigrants. It emphasises that integration is a two-way process requiring openness and commitment from the receiving society. The text presents international examples of cultural projects and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion, reducing prejudice, and improving social relations between immigrants and host communities.

The value of culture for inclusion

A distinct migration-related narrative in the cultural policy discourse of many EU Member States highlights the value of culture and the arts in providing psychological support, well-being, social inclusion, and professional integration for

displaced people. National governments both initiate open calls for such projects and support bottom-up initiatives emerging from local art scenes.

61 In-Cyprus, [“Face Forward” exhibition highlights plight of refugees in Cyprus](#), 9 October 2024.

62 ARHA+, [‘Voices of Migration’](#), n. d.

63 Kotoutuminen.fi [Integration.fi], [‘Yhteiskunnan vastaanottavuutta voidaan tukea tarinoilla ja taiteella’](#) [‘Society's receptivity can be supported with stories and art’], 18 December 2023.

The most common projects supported by cultural ministries in this area include initiatives that amplify the stories and experiences of refugee and migrant communities while fostering exchanges between people from diverse geographical backgrounds. For instance, Austria's Ministry of Culture launched a cross-disciplinary call for projects under the title Growing Together: Art and Integration. The aim of this call was to strengthen public awareness of constructive solutions in the fields of art and integration, promote exchange between different ethnicities, increase cultural participation among migrants, and encourage the intercultural opening of participating institutions⁶⁴.

Support for migrant communities also comes in the form of art classes and cultural education programmes. In this regard, Petri Honkonen, Finland's Minister of Science and Culture (2022–2023), reflected on how people fleeing the war in Ukraine can be supported through culture: 'Basic education in arts and cultural activities can help these children and young people and their families', also noting that 'recreational activities' can 'provide a channel for self-expression and an opportunity for engaging in something interesting in a crisis situation', seeing arts and cultural activities as crucial for the well-being of displaced individuals⁶⁵.

It is worth noting that it is often assumed or expected that artists and culture professionals with a migrant background or refugee status will take an active, if not central, role in conceiving and delivering art and cultural activities aimed at supporting migrant communities or displaced people. Austria's Ministry of Culture highlights

this in its Annual Report concerning the call for projects under Growing Together: Art and Integration: 'Numerous project proposals were submitted by artists and culture professionals with a migration background. The jury took this into account and aimed to reflect the diversity of different ethnicities in their selections'⁶⁶.

In the Czech Republic, the Government's Resolution on the integration of foreigners also encourages people with backgrounds from other countries to play an active role in projects aimed at building bridges between migrants and receiving societies, when it states the following among its multiple proposals: 'Support cultural, educational, and other events organised by the majority society or foreigners with the aim of sharing information about the culture and conditions in the foreigners' country of origin, as well as their living conditions in the Czech Republic'⁶⁷. The goal of such activities is to enhance mutual understanding and build stronger relationships between communities.

Another pronounced trend in national cultural policy discourse on migration relates to newcomers' access to local culture. Programmes and initiatives in this field exist in the majority of EU Member States, encompassing both culture-focused activities and the inclusion of culture in broader integration and orientation programmes. Examples of the latter include Estonia's adaptation programme which helps migrants learn the local legal and social context, acquire language skills, and, inter alia, become familiar with local cultural life⁶⁸. Another example is the cultural orientation and counselling programmes featured in Romania's *National Strategy on*

64 Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport, [Kunst- und Kulturbericht 2017](#), 2018, p. 363.

65 Ministry of Education and Culture: '[Ministry, foundations and funds promote preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage and Ukrainian participation in arts and cultural activities in Finland](#)', 7 June 2022.

66 Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport, [Kunst- und Kulturbericht 2017](#), 2018, p. 363.

67 [Postup při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců Ve vzájemném respektu 2023](#) – USNESENÍ VLÁDY ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY ze dne 14. prosince 2022 č. 1051 o Postupu při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců – Ve vzájemném respektu v roce 2023 [Procedure for implementing the updated Concept for the Integration of Foreigners – In Mutual Respect in 2023 RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC of 14 December 2022 No. 1051 on the Procedure for implementing the updated Concept for the Integration of Foreigners – In Mutual Respect in 2023], p. 13.

68 Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Culture, '[Adaptation Programme](#)', n. d.

*Immigration 2021–2024*⁶⁹. The Government of Finland is also interested in developing a cultural policy that takes diversity into account, in which immigrant participation in cultural life and promotion of integration through arts and culture are key elements⁷⁰.

Much less frequently, Member States also emphasise the importance of providing migrants with opportunities to contribute to local culture. For instance, Slovakia's *Situational Report on Cultural Policy Actions and Instruments* states that for the integration of displaced persons from Ukraine, it is important to create conditions that allow them to realise their potential and establish themselves as authors and performers

in Slovakia, thus giving them the opportunity to 'introduce their specific views and artistic work to the Slovak public, thereby enriching the Slovak cultural domain'⁷¹. There are also some projects conveying the value of culture for the well-being of newcomers. In Luxembourg for instance, a project that initially focused on establishing artist studios and cultural mediation has evolved to address psychological, social and emotional needs of asylum seekers. Hariko, located in Bonnevoie and Esch-sur-Alzette, provides workshops led by artists, offering young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, the opportunity to engage in various forms of artistic expression⁷².

Promotion of values and expressing solidarity at a state level

An important narrative within government discourse on displacement and exile relates to the expression of solidarity with people who are compelled to leave their homes due to wars or other threats. In recent years, this state-level solidarity has been strongly expressed by national ministries of culture or other government agencies, particularly towards people from Ukraine fleeing the country due to Russia's invasion. Several high-level speeches and statements have been made to convey governments' commitment to supporting Ukrainian people, both within and outside Ukraine, as well as expressing solidarity with and sympathy toward local cultural communities supporting displaced individuals. In this spirit, Hortensia Völckers and Kirsten

Haß, Board Members of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, said the following in 2022: 'Impressed by how many cultural institutions and creative artists are mobilising their forces to help the Ukrainians under threat, we are joining forces with everyone who is fighting against the destruction of Ukrainian culture by participating in the emergency aid programme. We know that it is a matter of survival'⁷³.

In some cases, politicians have gone beyond encouraging local scenes to support displaced artists, stressing the responsibility of the state itself. For instance, in 2022 Lithuania's Minister of Culture, Simonas Kairys, announced a state scholarship for Ukrainian artists seeking asylum

69 Official Gazette of Romania, [National Strategy on Immigration 2021–2024](#), Part I, No. 839 bis/2.IX.2021, p. 11.

70 Ministry of Education and Culture, [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#), Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2017, p. 11.

71 Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, [Situational Report on the cultural policy actions and instruments that the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and its subordinated organisations have initiated, implemented and/or plan to implement in the context of the protection of the culture of Ukraine and its inhabitants in their home country and in Slovakia](#), 2022, p. 2.

72 Le Gouvernement Luxembourgeois, Ministère de la Culture, [Kulturentwécklungsplang 2018–2028 – Volume 1](#), 2020, p. 154.

73 Kulturstiftung des Bundes, ['#WeStandWithUkraine – Soforthilfe-Stipendien für Kulturakteure aus und in der Ukraine sowie aus Russland und Belarus'](#) ['#WeStandWithUkraine – Emergency grants for cultural actors from and in Ukraine as well as from Russia and Belarus'], n. d.

in Lithuania: 'We hear and are glad that Lithuanian cultural institutions are already establishing partnerships with Ukraine's artists and cultural employees, accommodating and employing them as far as possible, and involving them in joint projects. However, during this initial stage, general attention from the state is also very important, as well as coordinated actions and, of course, financial support for the Ukrainian creators who fled the horrors of war without violating their country's laws and found refuge in Lithuania'⁷⁴.

Such support is less frequently expressed by high-level figures towards displaced artists in general, unrelated to their country of origin. One such statement was made in 2018 by the French Minister of Culture, Françoise Nyssen, on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *The Windows of the Studio of Artists in Exile*: 'The Ministry of Culture will support you, just as we support the *Atelier des Artistes en Exil* today. In workshops, in performance halls, museums,

theatres... Continue to give a voice to those who have none; continue to make space for the inaudible, for the unknown, for the unspeakable; continue to broaden our perspectives, to open our culture; continue to shake us up'⁷⁵.

In some countries, solidarity with Ukraine has prompted governments to extend support to victims of other conflicts. For example, in response to the refugee influx caused by the war in Ukraine, the Austrian Foreign Ministry and Ars Electronica launched the *State of the ART(ist)* call for proposals to create a virtual art gallery, providing a safe space for artistic freedom. Although initiated in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the initiative supports artists from other countries as well. The call explains that 'This is intended to support artists in Ukraine and around the world for whom making a stand for peace, freedom, and self-determination is impossible locally or only possible at great risk to themselves'⁷⁶.

Cultural diplomacy and artistic freedom

A number of countries address the issues of displacement and exile as part of their foreign policy missions. In the official discourse of these countries, support for at-risk artists is framed as part of the broader protection of values, such as freedom of expression, human rights, cultural diversity, and democracy. One example is Sweden, where the Swedish Arts Council runs a long-term programme to strengthen artistic freedom globally. The programme, initiated in 2020, is supported financially by Sida, the

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, until 2028. The goal of the programme is to improve conditions for artists to create, display, and distribute their work without being exposed to threats or harassment⁷⁷. In the renewal of the agreement with Sida in 2024, Kajsa Ravin, Director General of the Swedish Arts Council, stated: 'At a time when democracy is in retreat, it is particularly important that artists and cultural operators can work without the risk of threats and reprisals. Continuing our cooperation with

74 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, '[Lithuanian state scholarships to be awarded to culture and arts employees who left Ukraine](#)', 30 March 2022.

75 Ministère de la Culture, '[Discours de Françoise Nyssen, ministre de la Culture, à l'occasion du vernissage de l'exposition « Les vitrines de l'atelier des artistes en exil »](#)' ['Speech of Françoise Nyssen, Minister of Culture, on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition "The windows of the studio of artists in exile"'], 19 January 2018.

76 Federal Ministry, Republic of Austria, Europe and International Affairs, '[Austrian Foreign Ministry and Ars Electronica create virtual space for artistic freedom](#)', 30 May 2022.

77 Kulturrådet, '[Programme for artistic freedom](#)', n. d.

Sida means that more artists' lives, freedom, and opportunities to express themselves are protected around the world⁷⁸. Artistic freedom, displacement, and exile were key priorities in Sweden's cultural agenda during its Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2023, during which Member States adopted the 'Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists'.

Some governments view support for displaced artists as a matter of defending artistic freedom, not only abroad but within their own territories as well. This approach was conveyed by the French Minister of Culture, Françoise Nyssen, when addressing the founders of L'Atelier des artistes en exil: 'To provide a showcase for artists, wherever they come from; to keep freedom of creation and freedom of expression alive in our country, whatever the cost; to make works accessible to

the public; to open culture to all: to those who do not have access to it, in this country, and to those who enrich it elsewhere. [...] This is the mission entrusted to this ministry since its creation⁷⁹.

For some governments, such as Germany, supporting exiled and at-risk individuals is seen as a matter of international leadership. As stated in the 26th *Report of the Federal Government on Foreign Cultural and Education Policy for 2022*, 'Germany should be a role model and "safe haven" for art, culture, and freedom of the press'⁸⁰. The report also highlights the government's collaboration with institutions such as the Goethe-Institut, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Reporters Without Borders, and Deutsche Welle, in order to promote freedoms of artists and journalists fleeing to Germany.

Visibility and voices of displaced artists

Amid the myriad narratives on migration embedded in national cultural policies, the specific concerns of at-risk and displaced cultural workers remain relatively under-emphasised. Few ministries engage with these issues to the same extent as their engagement with the cultural 'integration' of minorities, including people with diverse ethnic and geographic backgrounds, or the use of culture and art to reframe migration narratives. In Spain, one of the objectives of the Ministry of Culture's *Equality in Culture Plan 2024–2026*⁸¹ is to make migrant and racialised creators and artists more visible. To achieve this, the Plan outlines activities aimed at raising awareness of migrant

and racialised women creators and artists, as well as cultural projects promoted by migrant and racialised women at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina. Additionally, the Plan includes actions aimed at improving knowledge about the situation of professionals and institutions in the cultural sector. For example, one study sought to examine the participation of migrant and racialised women in the cultural sector, analysing their areas of activity, working conditions, cultural representation, and the challenges they face in gaining visibility, recognition, and participation. Although the focus is specifically on female workers, this represents a unique inclusion of

78 Kulturrådet, '[New agreement with Sida strengthens artistic freedom](#)', 3 July 2024.

79 Ministère de la Culture, '[Discours de Françoise Nyssen, ministre de la Culture, à l'occasion du vernissage de l'exposition « Les vitrines de l'atelier des artistes en exil »](#)' [Speech of Françoise Nyssen, Minister of Culture, on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition "The windows of the studio of artists in exile"]].

80 Deutscher Bundestag, 26. [Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik für das Jahr 2022](#) (Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung, 20. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 20/9845) [26th Report of the Federal Government on Foreign Cultural and Education Policy for the year 2022 (Information from the Federal Government, 20th legislative period, Document 20/9845)], 13 December 2023, p. 15.

81 Ministerio de Cultura, [Plan de Igualdad en la Cultura. 2024–2026](#) [Equality in Culture Plan 2024–2026], 2024, pp. 31, 32, 61, 75.

the issue of migrant artists within the ministry's priorities. The Plan emphasises that these actions aim to 'continuously integrate' the contributions of migrant and racialised women creators and artists into cultural programming without stereotypes.

Displaced art professionals' challenges are discussed or at least acknowledged by several other governments. For example, Finland's *Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025* identifies the low representation of immigrants in cultural life as a weakness in its cultural policy SWOT analysis⁸². Some governments initiate public discussions on these issues, providing platforms for displaced artists to voice their needs and concerns. In 2022, the Art and Theatre Institute, a Czech government agency promoting art and theatre, organised a debate that brought together theatre and dance artists, curators, cultural managers, and theorists from both the Czech Republic and abroad. The event acknowledged that, on the one hand, the migration debate is highly politicised and lacks complexity and nuance, and on the other hand, 'the position of migrant artists is almost entirely absent from these debates, and migrants themselves are often misrepresented in mainstream performing arts and popular culture'⁸³. A similar call for a more nuanced approach was made by Austria's Ministry of Culture in a report on the evaluation of applications for the Growing Together: Art and Integration open call, which received many submissions from artists with migrant backgrounds. The report stated, 'The fact that migrants are not a homogeneous group

but represent a wide variety of life forms with different cultural backgrounds and needs posed a particular challenge. Engagement with one's own roots, personal history, and stereotypical role assignments played a significant role in the submitted projects'⁸⁴.

Reviewing policy documents and the websites of government agencies responsible for culture in EU Member States, it can be seen that migration, exile, artistic freedom, and other issues linked to and associated with at-risk and displaced artists feature prominently in official political discourse. The narratives surrounding these topics vary widely, with the most common focus on using culture to 'integrate' newcomers alongside other minority groups. However, shedding light on and discussing specific challenges faced by displaced artists is a less prominent priority. It is essential that how these discourses translate into practice and what concrete actions have been taken to support art professionals who have fled their countries or continue to work under pressure and threats are examined. While discussions on migration and welcoming people from different countries and cultures are prominent and varied in cultural policy documents, there is a noticeable lack of explicit attention to the specific needs, struggles, and professional recognition of at-risk and displaced artists. This absence is particularly striking, given that these artists are often expected to contribute to the integration process and help heal the wounds of their fellow compatriots arriving in the same countries.

82 Ministry of Education and Culture, *Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025*, Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2017, p. 29.

83 Art & Theatre Institute, '*The Show Must Go ON/OFFLINE – Theatre and migration*', 20 June 2022.

84 Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport, *Kunst- und Kulturbericht 2017*, 2018, p. 363.

National cultural policies across the EU: Support structures

The ‘Council conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists’ emphasises the urgent need for measures such as safe havens, ‘emergency residencies’, and ‘cities of refuge’ for artists facing dangerous circumstances. In response to crises caused by war, conflict, and other threats, European governments have developed and supported both permanent and temporary instruments, including facilitated accommodation programmes, information channels, and emergency financial aid. Beyond immediate support, the conclusions advocate for a more holistic and forward-looking approach that enables at-risk and displaced artists to continue their professional practice, build local networks, and make their voices heard – both artistically and as full members of their new communities.

Some EU countries have embraced this perspective by implementing long-term support measures such as grants for artistic creation and networking, mentorship and training programmes, funding opportunities that encourage collaboration with the local arts scene, employment incentives, and more. A range of initiatives identified through desk research are

analysed against several key parameters related to their offerings, such as whether the support is emergency-based or long-term, the sustainability and longevity of the assistance, and the inclusivity of target groups, among others. That is why some initiatives are discussed in multiple sections, each examining a specific angle, offering, and/or feature of that initiative.

Visa policies and related work permits

Visa- and work permit-related instruments specifically targeting creative workers can, in some cases, facilitate at-risk artists’ access to a safer place. However, these tools are generally designed for other purposes, such as attracting talent to a country or benefitting the local art scene, rather than specifically addressing the needs of displaced or at-risk artists. As a result, while some artists may benefit from these measures, many others find them difficult or

impossible to access as they are not specifically designed for them. For example, in Bulgaria, legislation has introduced eased requirements for labour market access for performing artists from third countries with proven professional competence, provided there is confirmed interest in hiring them, approved by the Ministry of Culture. According to the Employment Migration and Labour Mobility Act (2016, last amended in 2021), obtaining a decision from the Executive Director

of the Bulgarian National Employment Agency is required for the issuance of a Single Permit for Residence and Work of Performers⁸⁵. Unlike other professions, employers hiring performing artists are not obliged to conduct a prior labour market study, and the usual limit of 20% (or 35% for small and medium-sized enterprises) on the number of foreign employees does not apply⁸⁶. However, even if this policy facilitates access of performing artists to the country, a key barrier for many at-risk artists can be the need for employer confirmation before they can apply for this visa.

Another visa scheme targeting cultural workers exists in Denmark: an exemption from the work permit requirement for artists, musicians, performers, and associated staff in connection with a short-term artistic event. As a rule, foreign nationals working in Denmark must obtain a work permit. However, an exemption applies if the artist or performer is considered a 'focal point or main attraction' of a significant artistic event or is of major significance to it. This event may be part of a tour or a series of single performances⁸⁷. While this measure facilitates entry into the country, it does not provide a long-term residence permit and is primarily aimed at established artists who have already been invited to perform in Denmark.

France offers another example with its multi-year passeport talent residence permit, created to 'help foreign employees and self-employed persons develop France's economic attractiveness'⁸⁸. This permit, valid for up to four years, is available to professionals in fields such as research, higher education, business creation, and innovation. It also applies to individuals planning to engage in artistic and literary activities in France, provided they meet specific conditions. Applicants for

the passeport talent – profession artistique et culturelle [Skilled residence permit – artistic and cultural profession] must demonstrate professional engagement through one or more employment contracts, production or performance engagements lasting at least three months, and proof of financial resources. These resources must primarily originate from their artistic activities and meet at least 70% of the minimum legal wage in France for a full-time worker. Additionally, up to 49% of the required financial resources may come from personal funds. Applicants must also submit documentation proving their role as an artist or creator of a literary or artistic work.

These are just a few examples of visa instruments and related work permits targeting artists and other creative professionals. However, as they often require financial stability, international recognition, and established professional networks in the host country, they remain accessible only to a limited number of artists fleeing wars, persecutions and other hazards. Even though they are usually not designed for the needs of at-risk and displaced artists, there has been a need expressed for such instruments. For example, the 2024 report from the Mobility Information Points (MIPs) stated that: 'Where the duration of the planned mobility was known, 52.8% of consultations involved temporary mobility, while 47.2% were linked to permanent relocation. Of those linked to permanent relocation, 17.3% were for artists-at-risk (a total of 134). The most common nationalities of these artists-at-risk were Iranian, Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Turkish and Palestinian. Their destination countries were mostly Germany (86.6%) followed by France (11.2%), Portugal (1.5%) and Austria (0.7%)'⁸⁹.

85 Република България, Министерство На Труда И Социалната Политика [Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy], [Labour Migration and Labour Mobility Act, 2016](#) (last amended 2021), art. 15(3).

86 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Bulgaria 2020](#), 2021, p. 42.

87 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Denmark 2024](#), 2025, p. 19.

88 Gouvernement, France-Visas: '[International talents and economic attractiveness](#)', n. d.

89 Wilson, C. R., [Cultural Mobility Flows Report, Mobility Information Points at Work 2024](#), 2025, On the Move, p. 13.

Early-stage support

The provision of emergency support to people fleeing their countries – such as life-saving aid, emergency accommodation, clothing, food, and other basic necessities – as well as legal protection mechanisms, is typically not led by government departments and agencies responsible for cultural policy. However, some of these entities do establish channels for initial support to displaced and exiled artists arriving in their countries or fund such initiatives undertaken by civil society.

Relocation and shelter

One of the key and relatively common forms of initial support for displaced artists is providing a safe place to live and work. Among the organisations offering residencies identified in this study, only a few provide relocation support for artists at risk. One notable example is ARTISTS at RISK (read more in [Box 3](#)).

One of important cross-border initiatives providing relocation support and accommodation (among other types of support), though not directly linked to national policies, is the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)⁹⁰.

The provision of accommodation for displaced artists is often created by adapting existing residency programmes to the artists' urgent needs and pooling resources under specially dedicated initiatives. One such example is the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme in Finland, supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Goethe-Institut Finland and Nordic Culture Point. This programme provides residencies and accommodation for Ukrainian and Ukraine-based artists and art professionals affected by the war. Launched in March 2022, it was initiated by a group of independent art organisations that joined forces to share resources and information.

Box 3 - ARTISTS at RISK

ARTISTS at RISK (AR) was created in 2013 by Perpetuum Mobile ry (PM), operating at the intersection of human rights and the arts. AR developed into a global network of artistic institutions, non-profits, municipalities, state institutions, and international organisations dedicated to assisting, relocating, and funding artists facing persecution, oppression, or displacement due to war and terror.

Recognised as the leading institution for artists and culture professionals at risk, AR has provided support to numerous individuals worldwide. In the year 2022–2023 alone, AR co-hosted and funded 767 artists and culture professionals – excluding family members and dependents – through collaborations with 302 partner institutions across the globe. Its Helsinki-based AR Secretariat coordinates the online efforts of the global AR team, ensuring a streamlined and effective response to urgent cases.

Over its decade-long history, AR has assisted both emerging and internationally renowned artists facing threats, persecution, or imprisonment. Beyond its core mission of providing refuge and support, AR's umbrella organisation, Perpetuum Mobile (PM), also curates events, conferences, and the dedicated Artists at Risk (AR) Pavilion, which highlights the artistic practices of AR residents, further amplifying their voices on the global stage⁹¹.

⁹⁰ [International Cities of Refuge Network](#).

⁹¹ [ARTISTS at RISK](#).

The residencies are located across Finland, mainly in the south, and provide accommodation, travel expenses, and a working grant. Residency periods range from three to six months, with the possibility of extension up to 12 months⁹².

Information

Beyond relocation and shelter, access to reliable and timely information is crucial for displaced artists navigating new countries. Eight EU Member States – Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Slovenia – host Mobility Information Points (MIPs). These organisations assist artists and culture professionals with administrative challenges related to cross-border mobility, offering free consultations and guidance on visas, social insurance, taxation, and customs regulations. Many MIPs provide online or in-person consultations, legal advice, workshops, and online resources⁹³.

Even though the information provided by the MIPs is vital, for displaced and exiled artists some additional information is needed, for instance, information about access to psychological support and housing, connections with diaspora communities, and connection to professional networking opportunities. In France, the Agency

of artists in exile (aa-e), supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Labour, plays a key role in this area.

In Poland, the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, with co-financing from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, established a contact point for theatre professionals from Ukraine who have been temporarily displaced, as well as for Polish theatres offering support to their Ukrainian counterparts during the war. This contact point serves to assess the evolving needs of Ukrainian theatre practitioners while also monitoring the resources provided by theatre institutions and organisations. These resources include accommodation, job opportunities, material and financial aid, performances, readings, charity concerts, cultural offerings in Ukrainian, and long-term projects aimed at supporting Ukrainian artists⁹⁴. The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute has also organised a residency programme for displaced artists (read more in [Box 4](#)).

Similarly, Romania's Ministry of Culture launched a hotline for Ukrainian artists. Through its affiliated institutions – such as theatres, museums, and Artexim – it provided Ukrainian artists with essential information and support, including organising fundraising campaigns⁹⁵.

92 [HIAP – Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme](#).

93 On the Move, [Mobility Info Points](#).

94 The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, '[InfoPoint UA](#) | Інформаційний пункт для людей театру з України' ['InfoPoint UA | Information point for theater people from Ukraine'], 17 March 2022.

95 The World Bank, [Reimbursable Technical Assistance Services Agreement regarding the Strengthening of Planning and Budgeting Capacity II \(P168605\) – Institutional Strategic Plan 2022-2025 for the Ministry of Culture](#), The World Bank, p. 83.

Box 4 - Artistic Residency at the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute

The Artistic Residency Programme of the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute is organised with support from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Between 2021 and 2023, the programme financed local cultural institutions willing to host Belarussian and Ukrainian artists. Between 2021 and 2023, more than 100 Polish cultural institutions across 12 Polish cities expressed their willingness to accept residents into their teams⁹⁶. In the 2024 edition, of the residency, open to Ukrainian applicants, lasts one to two months, and covers various expenses, including travel costs for intercity rail or bus trips within Poland related to organised resident congresses, monthly pocket money for residents, and accommodation allowances for those without free housing from the host institution. The programme also covers the costs of creative supervision provided by the host institution. In addition to supporting artistic work, the residency offers a Polish language course, individual and group psychological consultations, and workshops on legal matters, fundraising, and self-presentation. The programme aims to enable residents to work creatively on a specific project or find new inspiration under the artistic supervision of Polish theatres and cultural institutions, while also fostering long-term collaboration between Polish cultural organisations and newcomers⁹⁷.

In Austria, the role of an information hub is played by Office Ukraine – Support for Ukrainian Artists, established just days after Russia's invasion. Acting as a mediation platform, it connects Ukrainian artists in need with those offering support. The office provides information

on scholarships, university applications, artist residencies, open calls, and cultural events, sometimes even offering free tickets to the Ukrainian art community (read more about the initiative in [Box 5](#)).

Box 5 - Office Ukraine. Shelter for Ukrainian Artists

The Office Ukraine⁹⁸ is designed for Ukrainian artists and cultural workers from all disciplines who have fled their country due to the war and who are seeking refuge in Austria. The main goal of this initiative is to enable displaced artists to continue their creative work and foster long-term artistic collaboration between Ukrainian and Austrian artists. It was founded in cooperation with the BMKOES (Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport), as well as civil society organisations and cultural institutions such as tranzit.at, < rotor > Center for Contemporary Art, Künstler:innenhaus Büchsenhausen, springerin, and other initiatives.

The Office Ukraine acts as a liaison between newcomers and the Austrian art scene, connecting them with cultural institutions, residencies, galleries, museums, off-spaces, design studios, film organisations, literature and music venues, funds, and other relevant resources across Austria. The Office provides a wide range of help, including assistance in finding temporary accommodation,

96 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Poland 2024](#), 2025, p. 68.

97 Ibid.

98 Office Ukraine. [Support for Ukrainian Artists](#).

psychological support, studio spaces, residencies, internships, and information about applying to universities. It also helps artists access exhibition, concert, and job opportunities, as well as grants. The Office has supported more than 2,000 artists (including their family members) since its creation in 2022. It operates through independent arts institutions and has offices in Vienna (MuseumsQuartier), Graz (< rotor >), and Innsbruck (Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen). The initiative collaborates with approximately 250 Austrian and international art institutions, including major organisations like Belvedere, Secession, Kunsthalle Wien, and Ars Electronica, as well as many smaller galleries, art initiatives, off-spaces, and music and art festivals⁹⁹.

Financial help

Financial aid plays a crucial role in the initial support provided by governments to displaced artists. Several emergency funding instruments – both annual and ad hoc – have been established by ministries of culture in EU Member States to offer basic financial assistance for relocation, as well as to help artists continue their work in the critical first months after being forced to leave their home countries due to war or other crises.

There are several examples of such funds, one of which is the Emergency Aid Fund for Ukrainian Cultural Actors in Germany, launched by the Goethe-Institut and the Federal Cultural Foundation in spring 2022, with an initial budget of 500,000 EUR. Given the high demand, the programme was extended in summer 2022, increasing the total funds to 1 million EUR, covering 550 scholarships. Additionally, an emergency aid fund for cultural actors from Russia and Belarus was introduced, with a total budget of 400,000 EUR (200 scholarships). Each scholarship, awarded for a maximum period of three months, with amounts of up to 2,000 EUR. The fund prioritises projects that address crisis-related challenges and support refugee cultural actors while preserving artistic communities¹⁰⁰.

Funding tools created in response to crises, such as the war in Ukraine, vary widely in scope, covering needs ranging from housing and equipment rental to the transportation of artworks or the production of new work. A notable example is Estonia's Special Fund for Ukraine, introduced in 2022. This initiative prioritises projects with broad impact, primarily covering travel and accommodation costs for Ukrainian artists, transportation of artworks, and translation of publications or subtitles¹⁰¹.

What is 'urgent'?

When evaluating the urgency or frontline nature of a support measure, two key factors must be considered: the speed of aid delivery and the flexibility of application requirements (such as timelines, formats, or the language in which the application can be made). Many initiatives launched in response to refugee crises remain ad hoc and are implemented in only one or two funding rounds. The majority of ongoing funding programmes for displaced artists follow an annual or biannual application cycle, which limits their effectiveness as emergency support. However, some programmes – such as ICORN residencies (read more in [Box 2](#)) – accept requests year-round, although high demand can result in delays. Very few initiatives offer three application rounds per year¹⁰².

99 UNESCO, *Quadrennial Periodic Report Austria 2024*, 2025, p. 54.

100 Kulturstiftung des Bundes, '[#WeStandWithUkraine – Soforthilfe-Stipendien für Kulturakteure aus und in der Ukraine sowie aus Russland und Belarus](#)' [[#WeStandWithUkraine – Emergency grants for cultural actors from and in Ukraine as well as from Russia and Belarus](#)].

101 UNESCO, *Quadrennial Periodic Report Estonia 2024*, 2025, p. 23.

102 See [PAUSE programme](#) in France.

Another critical factor in determining the urgency of support is the stage at which beneficiaries can access it – whether they are still in their home countries, newly arrived in exile, or already granted refugee or asylum-seeker status in another country. Most funding schemes identified in this study require applicants to hold official residency documents¹⁰³, and only a few funding instruments among those we identified support artists still residing in their home countries¹⁰⁴. Some programmes also impose time-based restrictions, defining their target group as people who have not lived in the country for more than a certain number of years. Some schemes place a stronger emphasis on how risk or emergency

situations have directly impacted artists' capability to work, requiring applicants to demonstrate that their professional situation has become worse due to a war, persecution or another crisis, or that they face persecution due to their professional activity¹⁰⁵. Risk, emergency, and crisis factors sometimes play a crucial role in evaluation and decision-making, particularly for first-line support such as relocation aid or the provision of safe spaces. For instance, the level of urgency of the risk experienced by the applicant or the degree of deterioration of their professional situation due to a war or persecution can be listed as eligibility or selection criteria for the programme¹⁰⁶.

Longevity of programmes and duration of their offerings

Lifespan of support initiatives

While assessing the actual impact of existing support schemes for displaced artists is beyond the scope of this study, it is helpful to gain a general understanding of the typical longevity of such programmes – their ad hoc or continuous nature – as well as the duration for which they support their beneficiaries. Generally speaking, there are two types of instruments and initiatives: those that are ongoing and those that are short-term support, either because they were designed as a one-time support for a specific event or because they have ceased to exist due to various

reasons, such as the discontinuation of funding or a shift in political priorities.

Some of the most prominent examples of good practices in the field of government support for displaced artists have existed for a number of years and are not tied to specific wars or other crises. For example, since 1997, Amsterdam Vluchtstad, run by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, has provided temporary shelter – typically for a period of one year – to writers, poets, or journalists who are persecuted, threatened, or otherwise hindered in their writing due to their work in their home countries¹⁰⁷. Another long-standing organisation

¹⁰³ For example, Lithuania's scholarship programme requires applicants to have 'temporary protection', while the U*Act fund in Germany and the NORA residency in France require 'refugee status'. Similarly, Slovakia's Art in Exile support from the Slovak Arts Council requires 'temporary or permanent residence', and Latvia's programme mandates a 'long-term visa with work eligibility'.

¹⁰⁴ One such exception is the Dutch Special Grant for Ukrainian artists (2022, 2024), which allows applicants to either already be in the Netherlands or use the funds to travel there for their project. See detailed information in Staatscourant Nr. 28177, [Regeling Steunfonds Oekraïense makers 2024](#), 16 September 2024.

¹⁰⁵ For example, residents of the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute must be Ukrainian professionals whose professional situation has become significantly worse due to the ongoing war, according to its 2024 open call. Similarly, ICORN clearly defines its support criteria, stating that it assists 'writers, journalists, and artists that face persecution due to their professional activities'.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, the level of emergency is one of the three evaluation criteria for the PAUSE residency programme in France. Likewise, at the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute (read more in [Box 4](#)), applicants are selected based on 'the degree of deterioration of the professional situation in the last two years due to the war in the country, including exclusion from practicing the profession', which is listed as the top criterion among four.

¹⁰⁷ The Dutch Foundation for Literature is one of the six state-financed foundations supporting culture in the Netherlands. See Dutch Foundation for Literature, ['Amsterdam City of Escape'](#), 22 February 2024.

in this field is the Agency of artists in exile (aa-e) in France, which has been supporting displaced and exiled artists since 2017 (read more in [Box 1](#)). A notable example is the Martin Roth-Initiative, which was established in Germany in 2017 (read

more in [Box 6](#)) and which supports cultural and civil society institutions to temporarily host at-risk artists and cultural workers, provide them with scholarships, and ensure the continuation of their work in a safer context.

Box 6. Martin Roth-Initiative

The Martin Roth-Initiative (MRI)¹⁰⁸ is a joint initiative of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) and the Goethe-Institut, funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. Since 2017, MRI supports cultural and civil society institutions to temporarily host at-risk artists and cultural workers, provide them with scholarships, and ensure the continuation of their work in a safer context. MRI provides funding for temporary relocation stays in regions of origin, either through direct financial support or in collaboration with host organisations. Furthermore, the initiative offers additional funding opportunities for artists and cultural workers, including direct funding that enables them to receive support without host organisations. Since 2023, MRI has introduced a limited quota of direct funding for artists and cultural actors in emergency situations. This allows recipients to independently travel to a self-selected safe location, with support provided through a one-time scholarship payment, typically covering a three-month period.

MRI offers scholarships, along with tailored support that includes necessary insurance, psychosocial assistance, language courses, training sessions, networking opportunities, and other professional development resources. Scholarship holders receive training on topics such as safety, sensitive public relations, and psychosocial support, as well as opportunities to connect with other hosts and fellows. MRI also assists in the visa application process.

These are just a few examples of long-standing initiatives that typically receive support from multiple sources and have evolved into autonomous organisations. While the establishment of these initiatives may be triggered by specific events and developments, their missions are not limited to responding to a particular war or crisis, and therefore are not tied to the continuation or resolution of these events. It is too early to assess the longevity of the programmes launched in response to Russia's war against Ukraine, although it is worth noting that some of these appear to be ongoing programmes, with a call for residents extending into 2025¹⁰⁹.

Many funds set up for Ukrainian artists held one or more open calls, with the most recent being launched in 2024 or earlier. In some cases, the termination of a support scheme has been officially announced. For example, since April 2022, the Lithuanian Council for Culture has provided over 424,000 EUR in funding, distributing 236 grants to Ukrainian artists who sought refuge in Lithuania. However, the 2024 call was the final one, and it was announced that the Ministry of Culture intends to restructure the support schemes for the Ukrainian cultural and artistic community. Therefore, the Council has urged Ukrainian creators to apply for the general grant for individual or mobility activities

¹⁰⁸ [Martin Roth-Initiative](#).

¹⁰⁹ See for example the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme, run since 2022 with a call in 2025: '[HIAP – Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme](#)'.

in 2025¹¹⁰. Another example is Culture Helps Culture, a project initiated in 2022 by the Cultural Council of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) and funded by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia to support artists who fled to the region due to the Russian war against Ukraine and sought to establish themselves in the state's cultural scene. Support provided through this project included assistance with finding housing and workspaces, opportunities to perform, artistic collaborations or training, and patronage programmes¹¹¹. The project's website announced that Culture Helps Culture was concluded in May 2024¹¹².

In other cases, official announcements regarding the continuation or termination of a support tool are not readily available in the public domain. In Austria, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service, and Sport established the Special Funding for Ukraine Aid, which provided rapid and targeted support to refugee Ukrainian artists by awarding work and project grants. The goal was to help these artists work and live safely in Austria, while also creating a platform for networking and exchange within the Austrian art and culture scene. In total, more than 250 project grants and scholarships were awarded, with a total funding amount of around 1.12 million EUR. While public communications do not yet clarify whether the fund will continue, the Ministry's website indicates that the support was set up 'from 2022 to 2024'¹¹³.

Some programmes continue but shift their focus in terms of the country of origin of the beneficiaries. In Poland, the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute has been running an Artistic Residency Programme for at-risk artists from Belarus since 2021. In 2022, this programme was urgently expanded to include artists from

Ukraine, and the 2024 call was open exclusively to Ukrainian artists¹¹⁴ (read more in [Box 4](#)). In this regard, some government institutions may draw inspiration from previous initiatives they have administered. For example, the Institut français de Jérusalem's Sawa Sawa residency programme¹¹⁵ for the Palestinian artistic and cultural scene was inspired by the NAFAS programme, a joint initiative by the Institut français, Association des Centres culturels de rencontre (ACCR) and the Institut français du Liban to support the Lebanese arts scene¹¹⁶.

The reasons for discontinuing support actions vary widely. Some initiatives were designed as temporary, one-off or ad hoc measures from the start, while others depend on local political and economic support, with some receiving more backing than others. The success of a programme also plays a role; while some initiatives grow from small, spontaneous actions into well-supported, long-term instruments, others do not manage to mobilise sufficient and continuous support. This research shows that there is a clear lack of stable, long-term initiatives available to at-risk and displaced artists across all EU countries. Even if there are some vital sustainable projects and initiatives in this field, many important support programmes, unfortunately, end once the initial emergency subsidies or when governments shift their focus to other priorities, leaving victims of war, political persecution, and other crises with less or without assistance.

Duration of support offered

Another important aspect concerns the duration of the support offered to beneficiaries, such as the length of time covered by a project grant

110 Lithuanian Council for Culture, '[Grant applications for Ukrainian artists who have taken refuge in Lithuania open until mid-November](#)', 26 August 2024.

111 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Germany 2024](#), 2025, p. 118.

112 Kultur hilft Kultur, '[Current art and cultural funding](#)'.

113 Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport, Austria – Art & Culture n. d., '[Help for Ukrainian artists](#)'.

114 The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, '[Artistic Residency of the Theatre Institute | 4th edition](#)'.

115 Institut français de Jérusalem, [Sawa Sawa residency programme](#).

116 This initiative was launched in 2020 and discontinued in 2021. See Association des Centres culturels de rencontre (ACCR), '[Nafas residency programme](#)'.

or the period of a residency. When it comes to the latter, a few initiatives allow beneficiaries to stay in a residency for an extended period. For example, ICORN's safe haven residencies are typically offered for two years¹¹⁷, and the Amsterdam City of Escape¹¹⁸ offers residencies for one year. Another example is the residency at the Cité Internationale des arts in Paris, which lasts a minimum of one month and a maximum of one year, with the possibility of an extension up to 18 months, and residencies in partnership with higher education institutions may be extended for up to 24 months¹¹⁹. Although several such examples exist, the majority of residencies identified in this study that offer support to at-risk and displaced artists host residents for shorter periods of time, with periods ranging from one to three months, or in some case from one to six months¹²⁰. There are also quite a number of grants and scholarships that are one-off and intended to be used within a short time frame, such as one to three month¹²¹.

The various programmes identified in this field are challenging to compare due to their differing benefits and unique characteristics, as they are often temporary or emergency tools or they are adaptations of existing grant schemes. Notably, there appears to be a shortage of programmes offering substantial, long-term support, both in terms of duration and the scale of benefits provided. Many initiatives serve as vital, immediate responses to crises, however, they often provide only brief periods of support, compelling beneficiaries to seek further assistance prematurely, which can strain their well-being and mental health. Forcibly displaced artists are particularly vulnerable, often having endured significant risks and trauma. Their recovery is complex and individualised, requiring an understanding of how trauma impacts their well-being. Establishing a supportive community is essential for their mental and physical health, and it is crucial that survivors are given the time, space, and resources necessary for a safe recovery¹²².

Sustainability and impact

The future-oriented perspective on support for displaced artists and the ambition to help them in a more sustainable manner beyond the initial emergency response are not only reflected in the stability of a programme itself and the longevity of its offerings, it is also essential to consider what exactly a support intervention provides. Is the support focused on financial aid

or accommodation to continue working in the first months of an emergency, or does it also provide access to local networks, skills development, platforms for collaboration, long-term employment opportunities, mentorship, or other long-term support? Moreover, the effectiveness of these offerings depends on how they are delivered, by whom, and under what conditions.

117 [ICORN-International Cities of Refuge Network](#).

118 [Amsterdam Vluchtstad](#).

119 [Cité internationale des arts](#) (France).

120 For instance, the Artists' Residency at PIK (Germany) is a three-month residency for artistic research at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. The programme is a cooperative project of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme and the City of Potsdam and is funded by the Federal Foreign Office and the City of Potsdam. This programme launched a special call for Ukrainian artists in 2022. Available [here](#).

121 For instance, the Creative Scholarship Programme for Ukrainian Citizens (Latvia) offers one-time creative work scholarships for a period of three months, granting 600 EUR each month. The same conditions are offered in the framework of the state scholarship for Ukrainian artists seeking asylum in Lithuania, which is a monthly grant of 600 EUR, awarded for a period of three months. Scholarships for Ukrainian artists offered by Austria's Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport are valued at 1,500 EUR per month per artist, and are provided for three months. More information at the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia (SCCF). Available [here](#).

122 Dowden, S. et al., [Mental Health, Well-being and International Cultural Mobility. Report and Policy Recommendations](#), On the Move, 2024, pp. 3-4.

Providing access to networks, partnerships and collaborations

A significant number of support schemes reviewed in this research aim to help displaced and exiled artists transition from the status of newcomers to members of local social and professional networks, eventually leading to their involvement in the labour market. This approach is often seen as mutually beneficial, fostering dialogue between local and foreign artists, enabling knowledge exchange, creating new partnerships, and stimulating project development.

Collaboration with the local scene is encouraged through various support measures. One of the less tangible yet crucial methods is facilitating networking and dialogue between the local art community and newcomers. This is achieved through organised talks, debates, and informal meetings, such as Tea Talks in Vienna, a shared artistic discussion and platform for transcultural

networking between people from Vienna and Ukraine. Hosted by the contemporary art museum Belvedere 21 and organised by Kultur & Gut and Ukrainian theatre director, Tea Talks were organised in 2022, reviving a format first introduced in 2016¹²³. While not exclusively targeting artists, such an event format can encourage their professional exchange.

Another way of fostering collaboration is structuring financial aid around joint projects or partnerships. Some programmes provide support to displaced artists but require collaboration with a local institution¹²⁴. While such schemes may favour those with pre-existing networks, they nonetheless encourage interaction and cooperation between the local cultural sector and newly arrived artists. Some initiatives go further by actively helping artists establish professional connections rather than expecting applicants to have pre-existing partnerships. One such initiative is QUESTION ME & ANSWER (QMA).

Box 7. QUESTION ME & ANSWER (QMA)

The QUESTION ME & ANSWER (QMA) initiative is run by SolidarityPlus¹²⁵ in Vienna and co-funded by the City of Vienna and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service, and Sport. This programme supports both local and foreign artists in meeting and co-creating work that contributes to a more diverse art scene. Even if not focused primarily on displaced artists, this initiative supports all types of newly arrived artists, helping them navigate the Viennese art and culture sector, fostering connections with various actors, including those who have been in Vienna for a longer time, and advocating for more diversity in the Viennese art sector.

Once a year, QMA issues an open call inviting artists from all disciplines to apply for a place in the QMA Artist Collective. Each year, 14-16 selected artists are grouped into teams of two or three to collaborate on an artwork. The programme prioritises diversity, typically pairing newly arrived migrant or refugee artists with those who have lived in Vienna for a long time. Over several months, the artists work together on their projects, which are later exhibited in a Viennese gallery. Throughout the programme, various networking events are organised, including guided museum tours, studio visits, and discussions with key figures in the Viennese cultural sector.

¹²³ Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport, [Kunst- und Kulturbereich 2022](#) [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sport, *Art and Culture Report 2022*], 2023, p. 78.

¹²⁴ For instance, the Support Programmes for Ukrainian Artists, administered by the Dutch Literature Foundation on behalf of the Dutch Government, only accept applications submitted by Dutch cultural organisations in collaboration with individual artists or groups. Similarly, the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia offered scholarships to Ukrainian professionals, provided they work with a Latvian cultural organisation.

¹²⁵ [Question Me & Answer](#).

Enhancing employment opportunities

Beyond fostering collaboration, some programmes actively promote the employment of displaced artists in local cultural institutions. The U*act programme in Germany, funded by the German Government and managed by the German Stage Association, finances the salaries of displaced artists from Ukraine and other countries who are employed by German theatres. This initiative is open to publicly funded state theatres, municipal theatres, and private theatres in Germany, supporting professionals in fields such as acting, directing, dance, choreography, scenography, dramaturgy, and composition. The programme exclusively funds artists' salaries, with a maximum total of 25,000 EUR per theatre, and does not cover additional costs such as materials or travel¹²⁶.

A similar employment-focused initiative is PAUSE in France, hosted by the Collège de France with support from the French Ministries of Higher Education and Research, Home Affairs, Europe and Foreign Affairs, and Culture, along with various higher education, research, and cultural partners. Through incentive-based funding, PAUSE enables exiled scientists and artists to be hosted by institutions in France, assisting them with administrative procedures and employment searches. The programme provides long-term support to help beneficiaries integrate, continue their work, and secure stability for their families. It co-funds host institutions through three annual calls for applications and helps displaced professionals find suitable placements, access legal services, and establish sustainable careers¹²⁷.

Providing mentorship

Mentorship programmes are another means of supporting displaced artists, though such initiatives are less common. One example is the 2020 Grant Programme for Artists with a Refugee Background¹²⁸, funded by the Mondriaan Fund in the Netherlands. This programme provided visual artists who arrived in the Netherlands as refugees with a fixed grant of 19,000 EUR to develop and present new work. The grant covered research, residencies, studio rent, materials, expertise, and exhibition preparation. In addition to financial support, recipients were assigned a mentor for one year through Cultuur+Ondernemen (Culture + Entrepreneurship). The mentor – an experienced visual artist or cultural intermediary – guided the artist in developing new work and connecting with the Dutch visual arts sector. Grant recipients had the freedom to choose their mentor from an approved list.

Promoting connections with (potential) audiences

Finally, some projects not only support artists in exile but also promote their connections with receiving communities, including their (potential) audiences. One such initiative is Hariko¹²⁹ in Luxembourg, a creative space fostering exchange between artists and young people aged 12 to 26. Open to all youth regardless of background, Hariko provides free workshops in various artistic disciplines, including visual arts and craft (such as drawing, graffiti and jewellery making), music (such as guitar, piano, and singing), and dance. The workshop offerings change every three months to ensure diversity and variety. Part of the Youth Programme of the Luxembourg Red Cross and supported by the Ministry of Education, Children, and Youth, Hariko serves as a platform for displaced artists to engage with young audiences while integrating into the local artistic scene.

¹²⁶ Deutscher Bühnenverein, Bundesverband der Theater und Orchester [German Stage Association, Federal Association of Theaters and Orchestras], 'U*act'.

¹²⁷ Collège de France, 'PAUSE programme'.

¹²⁸ On the Move, 'Mondriaan Fund > Open Call Artists with a Refugee Background'.

¹²⁹ Croix Rouge Luxembourgeoise, 'Hariko'.

Countries in the EU have implemented various measures to help at-risk and displaced artists produce their work and reach out to audiences, at times sharing their experience and culture in the process. One significant yet uncommon

approach is the establishment of a permanent space dedicated to showcasing the work of artists from a specific country and promoting the artists' culture more broadly, which is what the Ukraine House in Denmark does.

Box 8. The Ukraine House in Denmark

The Ukraine House in Denmark¹³⁰ is co-funded by the Ministry of Culture, Ukraine's Embassy in Denmark and the Ukrainian Institute. The Ukraine House in Denmark is intended to be a gathering place for Ukrainians and those interested in Ukraine in Denmark, showcasing Ukrainian art and culture in Denmark and contributing to strengthening the cultural ties between Denmark and Ukraine¹³¹. Officially opened in 2023, an international volunteer team of 20 people in Copenhagen has hosted over 7,500 guests and organised 6 exhibitions of Ukrainian contemporary art, design, photography, and architecture. They have also held more than 80 dialogues, panel discussions, and lectures featuring over 100 Ukrainian and Danish parliamentarians, journalists, artists, architects, and opinion leaders. The center has integrated Ukrainian content into major Danish cultural events like the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, Copenhagen Architecture Festival, Night of Culture, Copenhagen Photography Festival, and 3DaysOfDesign. Moreover, the Ukraine House has hosted concerts by prominent Ukrainian musicians, including the Dudaryk National Choir's performance at Copenhagen City Council for 800 guests.

Similar platforms and institutions focused on the cultures of specific countries already exist, typically funded by the respective governments and embassies, however, the establishment of a permanent centre on the initiative of the receiving country is less common. A more typical approach is centred on enabling displaced artists to present their artistic work, either related to the project grants they receive from the state or facilitated as part of residency programmes they participate in.

There are a few examples of state scholarships or grants supporting and stimulating beneficiaries to produce work and present it to local audiences. This was the case for the Special Fund for Ukraine in the field of culture of Estonia's Ministry of

Culture. Over the course of two years (2022–2024), the Special Fund for Ukraine in the field of culture of Estonia's Ministry of Culture funded 15 projects in the fields of visual arts, music, film, performing arts, architecture, photography and sports¹³². This initiative primarily covers travel and accommodation costs for Ukrainian artists, transportation of artworks, and translation of publications or subtitles. In Estonia's Quadrennial Periodic Report 2024 on the implementation of the UNESCO 2005 Convention, the impact of this fund is described as follows: 'As a result, the international visibility of Ukrainian art has increased, the audience of Estonian art institutions has increased and the visitor segments have expanded, Ukrainian artists have had the opportunity to continue their professional

¹³⁰ [Ukraine House in Denmark](#).

¹³¹ Kulturministeriet, Kulturministeriets departement, [Kulturpolitisk Redegørelse](#) [Ministry of Culture, Department of the Ministry of Culture, Cultural Policy Report], 2023, p. 40.

¹³² UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Estonia 2024](#), 2025, p. 23.

work, the projects have provided an opportunity to keep focus on the problems that Ukrainian cultural sector is facing¹³³.

Another example of a state grant for displaced artists that incentivises the presentation of beneficiaries' artistic work in the receiving country is the U-grant of the Slovak Arts Council, which was implemented through an open call Art in exile launched in 2022. Funding is provided for the creative process, and as specified in the guidelines of the call, 'the applicant is required to deliver the exact project outputs which they stated in their application even if the requested amount is reduced'. Importantly, it is also stated

that all funded projects are required to be presented publicly in Slovakia. In this regard, one of the elements required as part of the application package is the letter of acceptance from the organisation where the work will be publicly presented¹³⁴.

Many residency programmes have a different approach, one that does not necessarily require a public presentation of residents' works as a condition of taking part in the programme but that still does provide presentation spaces, by organising exhibitions and festivals, or by partnering with other existing art presenters (read more in [Box 9](#)).

Box 9. Goethe-Institut in Exile

Launched in October 2022, the Goethe-Institut in Exile initiative supports artists and cultural practitioners forced into exile due to the closure or relocation of Goethe-Instituts in countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Belarus, and Sudan. It aims to sustain international exchange, strengthen networks, and foster civil society connections. The programme is structured around country-specific focuses and broader themes related to exile, offering performances, film screenings, readings, concerts, exhibitions, discussions, workshops, and networking events.

Its launch in October 2022 featured a festival centred on Ukraine, with 45 events, over 100 Ukrainian artists, and 11 partner organisations. In 2023, the programme shifted its focus to Iran, followed by a dedicated initiative on Afghanistan from July to December 2023. The Afghanistan programme began with an opening festival in late June/early July, bringing together around 100 culture professionals from the Afghan diaspora across Germany, Europe, and the United States. This was one of the largest Afghan cultural festivals held in Germany in recent years¹³⁵.

Numerous one-off events, festivals, forums, and exhibitions have provided platforms for displaced artists, independent of specific support programmes. As previously mentioned, issues of diversity, inclusion, and migration – including themes of refuge and exile – have been prominent in cultural policy and the arts across many

European countries. One example is the Forum Spain with Refugees, co-organised in 2023 by UNHCR Spain and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among others. As part of the Forum, refugee artists, along with five renowned Spanish artists, reinterpreted 'Guernica', one of Pablo Picasso's most famous paintings and a universal

133 Ibid.

134 Ministère de la Culture, '[Solidarité Ukraine : la mobilisation entre dans une nouvelle phase](#)' ['Ukraine Solidarity: Mobilisation Enters a New Phase'], 23 February 2023.

135 Goethe-Institut, '[Goethe-Institut in Exile, A Platform and Resonance Space](#)', n. d.

symbol of the horrors of war¹³⁶. The performance took place simultaneously at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid and at art centres in Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Bilbao, and Pamplona. In Madrid, performances by the theatre companies Compañía Infinito and Maletas de Cartón, created in collaboration with a group of refugees, were presented. Additionally, the event featured literary and artistic contributions from Yousef Al Dubai, a Yemeni poet, and Monaf Andiwi, a Syrian-born painter, who shared works inspired by 'Guernica'.

While various support mechanisms contribute to the long-term professional and social transition of displaced artists, which is more often than not

the ambition of government agencies delivering such programmes, this research shows that they are quite scattered across EU countries, with some being more stable and long-term than others. Overall, they cover only a small portion of the refugee artists arriving in Europe, with some programmes focusing on specific disciplines and geographic origins. These programmes can serve as an important boost for beneficiaries to build connections and further develop their careers in their new countries, however, a more continuous and holistic approach to supporting them could help make their professional pathways more sustainable.

Holistic and multifaceted approach

For a displaced artist to become part of local communities and (re)build a sustainable career path in a new country, a wide range of support is needed – from emergency aid packages to long-term investments in skills, collaborations, and networks. A holistic form of support for displaced artists can take the shape of a platform or hub – a physical space that centralises various services, coordinates diverse initiatives within a specific city or country, and, importantly, connects those in need with those offering assistance. Acting as mediators, these hubs go beyond solely focusing on artists' employment and professional matters, instead providing a wide range of support to address various needs.

One such example of this holistic approach and space for gathering together various needs is the programme offered by Dance Ireland, the national dance development organisation funded by the Arts Council Ireland and the Dublin City Council. Dance Ireland created a page on their website

called 'Information for Refugees. Support & help for extended dance community' which presents the support package they offer to refugee dance artists arriving in Ireland. This package includes a free one-year membership, providing access to Dance Ireland's support services, grant opportunities, the Member's Studio, and the membership network. Artists can also attend professional classes free of charge for six months and receive studio space support. Moreover, they are eligible to apply for Dance Ireland residencies and awards. The team at Dance Ireland offers guidance, connections within the dance community, and advocacy where needed. If anyone wishes to access these supports or simply connect with the dance community, they can contact Dance Ireland directly, without having to respond to an open call¹³⁷.

Another example is the Office Ukraine. Shelter for Ukrainian Artists in Austria, which the Ministry considers an 'example of European best

136 UNHCR, [Forum "España Con Los Refugiados" – Results Report](#), July 2023, pp. 1-2.

137 Dance Ireland, ['Information for Refugees'](#).

practice¹³⁸ (read more in [Box 5](#)). Such hubs¹³⁹ can be a crucial point for newcomers to access diverse services, as well as the information on where they can get further support.

Taking a holistic approach, and considering the needs of the artists themselves, some examples of good practices do not limit their scope to activities within a specific national border, but rather they support displaced artists based in or relocating to other places. For example, the Martin Roth Initiative (MRI), funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, supports

cultural institutions in Germany by enabling them to temporarily host at-risk artists and culture professionals, so that they can continue their work in a safe environment.

Similarly, the Swedish Arts Council's Programme for Artistic Freedom is one of the few schemes providing multifaceted types of support to organisations based outside Sweden. Even if not solely focused on displaced artists, the mission of the programme does encompass issues related to refuge and at-risk situations.

Box 10. Programme for Artistic Freedom

The Swedish Arts Council's Programme for Artistic Freedom is a global initiative aimed at strengthening artistic freedom, funded by Sida, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, within Sweden's 2024-2028 development cooperation strategy for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The programme's first phase ran from March 2020 to August 2024, with the second phase continuing from August 2024 to December 2027. The programme supports organisations working to enhance artistic freedom in Official Development Assistance (ODA)-eligible countries, as designated by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC)¹⁴⁰. Its long-term goals include improving conditions for artists to create and share their work without fear of threats or harassment and ensuring that people can freely access and engage with art and culture.

As indicated on the website of the Swedish Arts Council, the direct beneficiaries of the programme are organisations advocating for artistic freedom, while the indirect beneficiaries include artists, audiences, and policymakers – all of whom benefit from improved working conditions, increased cultural diversity, and greater awareness of artistic freedom's role in democracy. Applications for funding are by invitation only, and only non-profit legal entities are eligible to apply. Funded projects must contribute to at least one of the programme's key objectives. This includes protecting artists' rights to freedom, fair trials, and freedom of expression in situations where they face threats or harassment from state or non-state actors. It also aims to ensure the right to life and safety for artists under similar circumstances. Moreover, the programme seeks to enhance the global monitoring of artistic freedom, strengthening the capacity of rights holders to engage in advocacy that promotes greater respect, protection, and realisation of these rights. Finally, it supports the creation of networks and forums that foster collaboration among those working to defend artistic freedom¹⁴¹.

138 UNESCO, [Quadrennial Periodic Report Austria 2024](#), 2025, p. 54.

139 Other examples include Agency of exiled artists in Paris (see Box 1) and Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute's Artistic Residency Programme (see Box 4).

140 OECD, ['ODA recipients: countries, territories, and international organisations'](#), n. d.

141 Kulturrådet, ['Programme for artistic freedom'](#), n. d.

This review of policies, funding schemes, residency programmes, and other support mechanisms for at-risk and displaced artists reveals that many initiatives strive to provide versatile support, offering multiple forms of assistance simultaneously. Depending on the programme, this support may take various forms, such as accommodation combined with a work grant or a funding scheme designed to increase artists' employment prospects alongside training opportunities. Another approach to multifaceted support involves offering beneficiaries flexible grants that can be used for a wide range of needs.

At the same time, the analysis in this research reveals that some EU Member States provide little to no tailored support for exiled and displaced artists and that this support can be ad hoc and unsustainable. Furthermore, it remains unclear to what extent these initiatives are coordinated

at the national or municipal level, how well they complement one another, and how easily newcomers can navigate them.

It could be argued that in many EU countries, displaced artists may be forced to piece together a patchwork of short- and long-term schemes or move from one application to another in search of comprehensive support. In many places, public support for the arts is project-based and relatively short-term, and displaced artists may find this short-term funding context even more challenging. Building a sustainable professional career requires stability and some degree of future certainty. Without a coordinated, structured, and multifaceted approach, the current fragmented landscape of support risks undermining, rather than fostering, the long-term connectedness, sense of belonging, and professional development of displaced artists.

Making voices of at-risk and displaced artists heard

The 'Council conclusions on at-risk artists and displaced artists' promote support that enables artists to 'remain artistically active and heard'¹⁴². While many of the presenting opportunities linked to grants and residency programmes do not directly specify the topics of art projects in their applications, there is an overall tendency to give at-risk and displaced artists a platform to voice their views, perspectives, and concerns related to identities tied to specific conditions – being a refugee, migrant, asylum seeker, victim of war, dissident, or, in some cases, coupled with other identities, such as being a woman – and issues, or to promote the culture and heritage of their countries of origin. While these roles may align with the aspirations of some artists, they do not match all artists' artistic approach or ambitions.

Some support programmes address this challenge by explicitly stating in their application guidelines that the quality of artistic work is the primary criterion for selection. An example is the State of the ART(ist) initiative¹⁴³, launched in 2022 by the Austrian Foreign Ministry and Ars Electronica, which awards artists worldwide whose artistic freedom is restricted due to political, social, or ecological threats. The Ministry's website specifies the following: 'People who take a stance through artistic approaches despite (or precisely because of) their precarious situation are invited to apply for the State of the ART(ist) Open Call'. Furthermore, the Jury Statement for 2024 notes the following: 'The jury conducted a rigorous evaluation process, with the question of risk being a fundamental aspect of

¹⁴² The Council of the European Union, '[Council Conclusions on At-risk Artists and Displaced Artists](#)' in *Official Journal of the European Union*, 26 May 2023, art. 16.

¹⁴³ Federal Ministry Republic of Austria European and International Affairs, '[State of the ART\(ist\) & Digital Deal Award 2024](#)', 15 April 2024.

evaluating each submission. Political and social contexts provided critical background, but while addressing this issue was a prerequisite for valid submissions, the jury's selection criteria were based on artistic quality¹⁴⁴.

As previously highlighted, displaced artists are often expected by ministries, arts councils,

and other institutions to facilitate connections between other newcomers and local communities. While exploring the potential for displaced artists to take on these roles, it is important to remember that artists, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, should navigate a more inclusive and stereotype-free environment.

Inclusivity and access conditions

Who can actually benefit from the support schemes available in EU Member States for at-risk and displaced artists? This question is complex and multi-faceted, as eligibility for these programmes depends on various factors. These factors include the applicant's country of origin and reasons for fleeing, their current place of residence, legal status in the host country, length of stay, artistic discipline, existing partnerships, and other considerations.

Geographic requirements and definitions

When it comes to geographic scope, only a limited number of tools and programmes are open to all at-risk and displaced artists forced to flee their homes, regardless of their country of origin¹⁴⁵. Some of these initiatives are particularly explicit about their geographic inclusivity. For instance, the jury of the State of the ART(ist) initiative includes an anti-discrimination statement: 'We should emphasise that in its work, the prize adheres to international human rights conventions, affirming that discrimination on grounds of origin, ethnicity, race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation,

or any other identity category is unacceptable. Regardless of any government or leadership's violations of basic freedoms and human rights, collective discrimination against individuals based on the actions of their country or its leaders is not legitimate. Individuals stand for their own thoughts and actions¹⁴⁶. Another example of clear geographic inclusivity is the mission of aa-e (read more in [Box 1](#)): 'The mission of the agency of artists in exile (aa-e) is to identify artists in exile of all origins and disciplines, to support them according to their situation and needs, to offer them work space and to put them in contact with professionals¹⁴⁷.

Some programmes are not globally open but encompass several countries. For instance, the Goethe-Institut in Exile project supports artists forced into exile due to the closure or relocation of Goethe institutes in countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Belarus, and Sudan. The Question Me & Answer open call (read more in [Box 7](#)) targets people from the Global South or the Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe¹⁴⁸. Initiated in 2016, the NORA residency programme targets refugee artists, researchers, and culture

144 Ars Electronica, '[Jury and Advisors 2024](#)', n. d.

145 These initiatives, already discussed at length in this report, include platforms such as the Martin-Roth Initiative in Germany and the Agency for exiled artists in France; grant and award programmes like the State of the ART(ist) initiative in Austria and the grant scheme for artists with a refugee background in the Netherlands (which was only rolled out in 2020); residency programmes convened by ICORN, and the PAUSE programme and residencies offered by the Cité Internationale des Arts in France; the refugee support package set up by Dance Ireland, and more.

146 Ars Electronica, '[Jury and Advisors 2024](#)', n. d.

147 [Atelier des artistes en exil \(aa-e\)](#) [Agency of Artists in Exile].

148 However, the term 'Global South' is left undefined and there are 22 countries listed as part of the CESEE region; see Question Me & Answer, '[QMA Artist Collective 2025 OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPATION](#)', 2025, p. 2.

professionals from the Near and Middle East and Africa – specifically Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan, and Eritrea – who have recently been exiled in France¹⁴⁹.

A few schemes among those reviewed were created to support people fleeing their countries due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with strands not only for Ukrainians escaping the war but also for Russian dissidents and, in some cases, for Belarusian artists. These include two funds from the support programme disbursed by the Dutch Government – one for Ukrainian and another for Russian artists – as well as two Emergency Aid Funds in Germany – one for Ukrainian artists (550 scholarships in 2022) and another for Belarusian and Russian artists (200 scholarships)¹⁵⁰.

Some long-established programmes and platforms supporting refugee artists from all countries affected by emergencies tend to extend their support to people from every new country experiencing such crises. However, when it comes to new, most recent tools, the majority target only the artists fleeing Ukraine due to the full-scale war¹⁵¹, and a few are focused on the war in Palestine. In some cases, the solidarity with Ukraine triggered by the war led to the creation of support instruments open to refugee and at-risk artists from other countries, or some instruments designed to support Ukrainian embraced people from other countries, such as the Emergency Residencies Programme for Artists and Cultural Practitioners of the TEJA network in Spain (see [Box 11](#)).

Box 11. TEJA – Network of Cultural Spaces in Support of Emergency Situations

TEJA¹⁵² is a Spanish solidarity network that supports artists and culture professionals in emergency situations. Established in 2022 in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it began as an initiative by Madrid's independent art spaces and has since expanded its scope to other crisis contexts, striving for long-term impact. Today, TEJA comprises seventeen cultural institutions.

In light of the severe challenges facing the Palestinian artistic and cultural community, TEJA will host six new three-month residencies in 2025 for artists and cultural practitioners from the West Bank and Jerusalem. During their stay in Spain, residents will receive accommodation, legal and psychological support, and access to a network of professionals and organisations, enabling them to continue their creative work in a safe and stimulating environment. The programme also fosters international collaboration and ensures spaces for artistic dialogue and freedom of expression.

Beyond individual residencies, TEJA plays a crucial role in sustaining creative projects for artists from conflict-affected regions such as Ukraine, Belarus, Palestine, and Iraq. Its initiatives provide both direct support and opportunities for cross-border cultural exchange¹⁵³.

149 ACCR – Association des Centres culturels de rencontre [Association of Heritage sites for Culture], '[Call for applications 2025 / NORA Residency Programme](#)', n. d.

150 Kulturstiftung des Bundes, '[#WeStandWithUkraine – Soforthilfe-Stipendien für Kulturakteure aus und in der Ukraine sowie aus Russland und Belarus](#)' [[#WeStandWithUkraine – Emergency grants for cultural actors from and in Ukraine as well as from Russia and Belarus](#)'], n. d.

151 These include funds and scholarship programmes in Austria, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; the U*act support scheme in Germany; the *Culture Helping Culture* programme initiated by the North Rhine-Westphalia Cultural Council; the *Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme* in Finland; a special call of the *PIK residence programme* in Potsdam; the *Office Ukraine – Shelter for Ukrainian Artists* in Austria, and more.

152 [TEJA](#).

153 TEJA / Red de espacios culturales en apoyo a situaciones de emergencia [TEJA / Network of Cultural Spaces in Support of Emergency Situations], '[Emergency Residencies Programme for Artists and Cultural Practitioners Living in Palestine](#)' (2025)', n. d.

There are different ways in which the programmes reviewed in this research determine an applicant's affiliation with the country in focus. The prevailing trend is to target citizens (passport holders) with some programmes, while also specifying additional requirements¹⁵⁴. However, a few schemes extend eligibility to residents as well¹⁵⁵, which shifts the focus from nationality of the person to their actual proximity to a threat compelling them to leave a country where they live.

An interesting and rather unique approach is taken by Vienna's QMA Artistic Collective programme which states the following: 'in the framework of this programme we do not put any importance on the notion of formal citizenship, but rely on self-definition. This means that of course stateless persons who identify with the listed regions or individuals, who never received the citizenship of the country they consider their home, are also welcome to apply'¹⁵⁶.

At-risk status: eligibility and obstacles

Another key factor in determining eligibility for these support programmes is the reason behind an artist's displacement or at-risk status. For example, the Martin Roth-Initiative takes a broad yet clear approach, defining its target audience as 'artists and cultural actors worldwide, who, because of their work or due to other circumstances, experience restrictions on their freedom or threats from state and/or non-state actors'¹⁵⁷. Additional eligibility criteria include lack of access to a safe abode, language skills, and the relevance of the applicant's artistic work.

Only a small minority of schemes explicitly state that they support victims of all types of emergencies, listing various reasons for migration. For instance, the Agency of Artists in Exile lists 'war, racial, ethnic, sexual and gender discrimination, or religious, economic and political marginalisation' as reasons why their target audiences leave their homelands¹⁵⁸. This research found very few programmes that explicitly acknowledge environmental disasters as causes of displacement¹⁵⁹.

When examining the various conditions for artists to benefit from the support mechanisms reviewed above, it becomes clear that several barriers may prevent many artists in crisis situations from accessing state support for displaced artists in EU Member States. The first and most apparent barrier relates to an artist's country of origin or residence. Evidence indicates that only a few programmes and schemes, which do not cover all Member States, are open to all countries affected by war or other emergency situations.

Furthermore, while not widespread, some tools require artists to demonstrate their inability to work in their homelands, including persecution related to their work. In many cases, this and similar conditions are effectively addressed by meeting another criterion: having refugee or asylum seeker status. According to legislation, this status serves as proof of the hardship faced in their country of departure. However, assessing legal status in a receiving country as an eligibility criterion for support schemes is challenging, as the conditions for obtaining a specific status depend on the applicant's country of origin, individual circumstances, and the policies of the host country.

154 For instance, Ukrainian artists must have resided in Ukraine at the outbreak of the war on 24 February 2022, as required by the Dutch government's support programme for Ukrainian artists.

155 For example, the residence programme of the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute welcomes both citizens and residents of Ukraine, as does the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme in Finland.

156 Question Me & Answer, '[QMA Artist Collective 2025 OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPATION](#)', 2025, p. 2.

157 Martin Roth-Initiative, '[Programmes](#)'.

158 Agency of Artists in Exile, '[About us](#)'.

159 One of them is the State of the ART(ist) award in Austria, which defines its target audience based on factors affecting artistic work, including 'oppression, lack of freedom of expression, political persecution, acts of war, exploitation, climate change and natural disasters'.

Other potential obstacles may arise when artists attempt to access state support for at-risk and displaced artists. These obstacles generally relate to the applicant's level of formal education and qualifications, professional development, career stage, and network and connections. As previously discussed, visa requirements are often not aligned with the applicants' circumstances.

Moreover, some grant and scholarship schemes require artists to demonstrate existing partnerships with local organisations or even confirmed agreements to present work funded by

the grant. These conditions can be challenging for newly arrived applicants who have not previously collaborated with the local scene, even for those with a history of international partnerships. The requirement to engage with local cultural institutions to apply for financial aid also forces displaced artists to compete with one another.

While such support tools, including grants provided directly to local organisations for engaging displaced artists, can foster collaboration and exchange, they may also exclude cultural workers who lack connections in their host countries.

Cross-border initiatives

When addressing the needs of displaced artists, much emphasis is placed on helping them establish roots, integrate, and engage with local cultural communities. While this local focus is vital for fostering a sense of home, belonging, and security, it is equally important to acknowledge that artists and culture professionals seek transnational exchanges, cultural dialogues, and artistic collaborations. Many have worked internationally, often as much outside their home countries as within them. For those who have not yet established an international career, it is essential to provide this opportunity for inspiration, artistic growth, and peer-to-peer solidarity across borders. For all, an international practice often contributes to economic sustainability and helps maintain artistic and professional relationships with peers who have relocated to other countries.

Therefore, this research examined whether cross-border connections and collaborations are adequately promoted within existing support schemes for at-risk and displaced artists seeking to continue their professional practices. There are some recently developed cross-border support schemes, as well as individual and one-off projects and initiatives undertaken by certain

organisations active in this field, to promote cross-border collaborations involving displaced and exiled artists. Some of these initiatives are funded through the Creative Europe programme.

The Nordic Culture Fund has supported several cross-border projects aimed at supporting at-risk or displaced artists, such as the play *The Wedding* that was created through a collaboration between Blaagaards Theater in Copenhagen and the Theatre of the Women of the Camp in Beirut's Borj el Barajneh refugee camp. The production aims to break down barriers between the refugee camp and the broader world, fostering understanding between different cultures¹⁶⁰. Another relevant initiative supported by the Nordic Culture Fund is the Contemporary puppetry network Nordic-Ukraine, bringing together Ukrainian and Nordic puppetry artists¹⁶¹. In spite of these good examples, this research has found that while there are a few significant initiatives fostering cooperation between support organisations at an international level, the number of programmes promoting cross-border work for displaced artists on a continuous basis remains limited. Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of political recognition – both at the EU and

¹⁶⁰ Nordic Culture Fund, '[The Wedding](#)', n. d.

¹⁶¹ Nordic Culture Fund, '[Contemporary puppetry network Nordic-UA](#)', n. d.

national levels – of the importance of the cross-border dimension in supporting relocated artists. An exception to this could be the Culture Moves Europe programme, which explains that ‘If there is a serious threat to safety and security in the country where applicants are legal residents,

applicants can request a virtual project directly at the application stage. If there is a serious threat to safety and security in the destination, applicants must request a virtual project directly at the application stage’¹⁶².

Box 12. Nordic Culture Point

Following USRP and part of the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme, a 2024 call targeting residency centres in the Nordic and Baltic countries opened for funding to host Ukrainian artists, covering all associated costs, including expenses for accompanying individuals or groups¹⁶³.

Eligible applicants include existing residency centres, organisations, institutions, and groups with at least one year of documented experience in organising residencies in the arts and culture sector. Individual applicants cannot apply for funding. Residency centres must be located in the Nordic Region (Denmark, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland) or the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania).

The programme aims to create a safe space for artistic exploration, foster professional networks, and facilitate dialogue between Ukrainians and local communities. Funding is available for all artistic and cultural fields, ensuring that artists can focus on their work and collaborate with local practitioners.

Residencies are recommended to last two to four months, with funding available for use within the application year and two additional years. Applications must be submitted at least two months before the intended start date. Selected residency centres can choose artists either through open calls or direct invitations. Each residency centre can receive up to 50,000 EUR to cover costs such as travel, subsistence, remuneration, and other expenses. Up to 15% of the budget can be allocated to administrative costs, however, the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture cannot be the sole funding source for the centre’s activities.

¹⁶² European Commission, [Culture Moves Europe, Individual Mobility Action Residency Action Call for Individual Mobility Call for Residency Hosts](#), Goethe-Institut, 2024, p.9.

¹⁶³ Nordic Culture Point, [‘Additional round of funding to support Ukrainian artists and cultural creators’](#), n. d.

Box 13. Culture of Solidarity – EUNIC Ukraine Fund

Culture of Solidarity Fund¹⁶⁴ is an initiative organised in partnership with EUNIC, the network of EU National Institutes for Culture, with funding from the Government of Flanders and the European Cultural Foundation, alongside additional contributions from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Czech Centres. The call is open to EUNIC clusters and their local cultural partners in any of the 46 Council of Europe Member States. Proposed projects should focus on at least one of the following objectives: enhancing the visibility, awareness, and engagement of Ukrainian art and culture among audiences, communities, and stakeholders; strengthening ties between Ukrainian and European cultural institutions to encourage long-term collaboration; or fostering discussions and raising awareness about Ukraine's current situation through cultural and artistic expression.

Two types of grants were available during their latest open call round: small grants of up to 10,000 EUR and medium grants ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 EUR. While co-funding is not required, projects with a well-balanced budget and diverse funding sources are more likely to be feasible. Applications have to be submitted by either a full EUNIC member organisation with letters of engagement from at least three different EUNIC members within the local EUNIC cluster or a local partner organisation in a Council of Europe member state with official support letters from at least three EUNIC members active in the country.

The Fund welcomes applications from various types of organisations, including NGOs, public institutions, private enterprises, and cooperatives, as long as they operate in the cultural, artistic, and creative sectors or other in relevant fields, such as education, human rights, and social entrepreneurship. However, individual applicants are not eligible to apply.

164 European Cultural Foundation, [Culture of Solidarity - EUNIC Ukraine Fund Second partnership edition](#), 2023, pp. 1-2.

Conclusion

At the EU level and throughout Member States, various policies, programmes, and initiatives aim to support at-risk and displaced artists fleeing war, repression, and other crises. However, substantial gaps remain in the provision of this assistance. Many national cultural ministries, particularly in countries with high refugee intakes, offer minimal or no targeted support within their cultural policies. Exemplary practices in sustainability, inclusivity, and impact are often concentrated in a few states, while others offer only short-term aid or small-scale interventions. Many existing initiatives were established as emergency responses and have since been discontinued without being replaced. Although immediate support, such as residencies, safe spaces, and emergency grants, is crucial, there is a need to explore how these ad hoc measures can evolve into sustainable, long-term support. This could be achieved by integrating them into broader cultural policies and funding frameworks or by replacing them with more effective, long-term alternatives.

While a uniform EU-wide approach is challenging due to varying national contexts, there is potential for countries to learn from each other, adopt proven models, and collectively enhance existing good practices. Certain reviewed support programmes present barriers to access for at-risk and displaced artists, potentially excluding applicants based on their career stage, professional network, and financial stability. Some visa schemes necessitate that applicants be well-established and financially secure, which can inadvertently exclude emerging artists or those experiencing economic difficulties. Similarly, specific grants and scholarships mandate proof of existing partnerships or confirmed agreements to showcase funded work in receiving countries, conditions that can be challenging for newcomers unfamiliar with the local cultural environment.

While grants aimed at local organisations to engage displaced artists can promote

collaboration, they may also disadvantage those without prior connections or an international reputation. Best practices involve incorporating networking, matchmaking, and collaboration building into support packages, rather than requiring pre-existing partnerships.

Member States endorse a variety of initiatives, some originating from civil society and later funded by governments, others initiated by governments themselves, and some co-founded through public-private partnerships. While this research did not evaluate their impact, sustainability, or relevance, it is evident that initiatives involving civil society, consulting the arts sector, and empowering grassroots actors tend to be the most effective and enduring. In addition, collaboration between governments and independent cultural organisations enhances impact and efficiency, amplifying meaningful initiatives.

Several robust, state-backed initiatives addressing the needs of at-risk and displaced artists have been implemented across Europe, without being confined to a specific country or region of origin. However, many recent programmes primarily targeted Ukrainian artists. While focusing on specific countries or crises can be effective and valuable, broader strategies must ensure inclusivity for artists from diverse backgrounds. Successful models developed for a particular crisis can be expanded or adapted to assist artists affected by other conflicts and emergencies worldwide.

Both emergency relief and long-term career support are vital for at-risk and displaced artists. Some programmes integrate both elements within a single framework, offering financial aid, accommodation, psychological support, information access, networking platforms, cultural engagement opportunities, mentorship, training, employment, and presentation spaces. Platforms

that centralise access to these services or provide guidance on available support mechanisms are essential for navigating complex funding landscapes. Engaging diverse stakeholders – including government agencies, diaspora communities, cultural institutions, displaced artists themselves, and societies at large – can enhance efficiency and long-term impact.

Providing effective support for displaced artists necessitates robust cross-border collaboration. This involves knowledge-sharing, joint problem-solving, and ensuring that national policies complement one another, both within different government portfolios and at an international level. Artists inherently seek international exchange, collaboration, and creative dialogue, making access to cross-border opportunities crucial for their artistic growth and professional development. As artistic careers often transcend national boundaries, assistance programmes should facilitate engagement with international peers. This includes coordinating visa policies and offering grants and scholarships that support international projects. While some initiatives promote cross-border cooperation between support organisations, relatively few programmes actively facilitate international work for displaced

artists themselves. Generally, there is a lack of political recognition – at both EU and national levels – of the importance of cross-border engagement in supporting refugee and at-risk artists.

Large-scale initiatives focusing on understanding and researching the evolving needs of displaced artists themselves remain scarce. Systematic, cross-border, and large-scale research, consultation, and dialogue are needed to integrate artists' perspectives into policy frameworks and support measures. Ensuring outreach to those not benefiting from state grants or not connected to the local cultural scene is equally crucial.

While emergency interventions for at-risk artists must be expanded, addressing the root causes of artistic repression and insecurity is equally important. The EU and its Member States could take a leading role in defending artistic freedom globally, advocating for safe environments for creatives, developing training tools for rights protection, and emphasising the intrinsic value of arts and culture. Importantly, these priorities should be translated into concrete actions within the EU itself, beyond symbolic political statements.

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