



ARTS COUNCIL MALTA

STRATEGY

2025 / CARE
CREATE
FLOURISH

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION



WE NOW WANT TO
HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS
ON WHAT WE ARE
PRESENTING IN THIS
DOCUMENT, HOW DO
YOU THINK WE HAVE
ADDRESSED THE
OUTCOMES OF THE
CONSULTATION AND
ANY IDEAS THAT CAN
CONTRIBUTE FURTHER
TO THE FINALISATION
OF THIS STRATEGY.

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FOREWORD

FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS, ARTS COUNCIL MALTA (ACM) WORKED TOWARDS PROMOTING INNOVATION WITHIN THE CULTURE AND CREATIVE SECTORS, WHILST ALSO SAFEGUARDING THE DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS. IT BUILT A SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE ECONOMY FOR ARTISTS AND PRACTITIONERS, FACILITATING PARTICIPATION AND CONTINUES TO SERVE AS A STRATEGIC LEADER AND CATALYST WITHIN THE SECTORS. ACM'S ROLE WITHIN THE CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM ALSO SEES TO THE INCREASE IN ACCESSIBILITY FOR CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES.

When Strategy2020 was launched in 2015, the local cultural and creative sectors were in a very different place than they are now. Since then, an unprecedented increase in government investment in the sectors, a bolder presence of Malta within the international artistic community as well as stronger local and international partnerships have taken place. We also saw an increase in the knowledge base on how the sectors function and their overall social and cultural impact, and more people have benefitted from public funding directly or indirectly. Public Cultural Organisations as well as independent cultural organisations have exponentially improved in their capacity building and greater priority keeps being given towards arts education and schools via collaborations with artists to increase exposure of young people to the arts.

This was a result of the fruitful collaboration of bold efforts together with a wide range of stakeholders, both in the public sector and all the artists and cultural operators whose dynamism, creativity and innovation have enriched the sectors substantially over the past few years. Nonetheless ACM is confident enough to say that its role has been central in terms of investment, advocacy, and support, to empower and facilitate these improvements over the years.

Overall, Strategy2020 can be considered as a success even though there were significant challenges, especially when approaching its end, namely due to the pandemic's impact on the sectors. This, however, motivated a rethink of the way to support the development of the sectors. The aim was to use this opportunity to address the needs and concerns of the sectors and the public in relation to arts and culture. This was reflected in the increased participatory mechanisms which were adopted so as to conduct the public consultation process towards Strategy 2025, involving extensive conversations with the public and representatives of the sectors, as well as internal reflections and evaluation about the different challenges and opportunities.

With the National Cultural Policy 2021 being launched in September 2021, Strategy 2025 aims to implement the policy and be in line with its priorities and commitments towards embracing culture for the wellbeing of all, highlighting the importance of cultural rights within the context of sustainable development goals, and addressing head on the Status of the Artist, something which became even more evident since the recent challenging global events started being experienced.

The Strategy 2025 was designed together with the people that will be mostly impacted by it. The participatory approach integrated in this strategy is thus being practiced with immediacy. Care Create Flourish are the mantras that best capture how ACM will be empowering sustainable and inclusive growth of the cultural and creative sectors as integral to the wellbeing of all.

This draft of Strategy 2025 is only the beginning, and ACM looks forward for your invaluable feedback since the aim is to deliver the best possible outcomes that will keep the cultural and creative ecology at their core.

CARE CREATE FLOURISH - TOWARDS STRATEGY 2025

IN DECEMBER 2015, ARTS COUNCIL MALTA (ACM) PUBLICLY LAUNCHED ITS FIRST STRATEGY – STRATEGY2020 – AT A TIME WHEN THE VALLETTA 2018 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE WAS UNDOUBTABLY AT THE CENTRE OF MALTA’S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS MEANT THAT 2018 WAS AT THE FULCRUM OF OUR PLANS IN THE RUN-UP TO THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE AS WELL AS ITS LEGACY BEYOND THE MOMENTOUS YEAR. IT WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT FOR MALTA, WHICH WAS A KEY DRIVER IN FORMULATING OUR VISION OF PLACING ARTS AT THE HEART OF OUR FUTURE AS A COUNTRY. SIMULTANEOUSLY, WE ALSO ESTABLISHED CONCRETE ACTIONS THAT WORKED TOWARDS BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR POST-2020 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ONGOING CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITIES THAT FORM THE CREATIVE ECOLOGY WE STRIVE TO SUPPORT. WE BELIEVE THAT OUR WORK IN THE PAST SIX YEARS HAS ENABLED US TO CONTINUE CARVING OUT OUR PATH AS A STRATEGIC LEADER FOR THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS, AS WE BUILT NUMEROUS MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER WIDESPREAD CREATIVE AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION, PRACTICE AND PARTICIPATION.

We did not expect that such long-term vision would be fully achieved in five years – yet we were able to evaluate and measure our successes in fulfilling our commitment towards it. Our unprecedented level of investment in the development of artistic and cultural work through funding, brokerage, research, advocacy and capacity building initiatives has significantly contributed to bring to the forefront the value of arts and creativity in public discourse. The evidence suggests that in the past six years there have been overall increases in levels of cultural participation across socio-demographic groups. This complements the data we have gathered suggesting that the creative work we supported has indeed left a positive impact on communities, socially and economically. Public Cultural Organisations within our remit, have strengthened their capacities with our support, resulting in cultural programming that pushed boundaries. Collaborations with public entities, private and voluntary organisations from within and outside the creative and cultural sectors, have also been strengthened further reflecting ACM’s position as a cultural leader. Nonetheless a number of structural challenges remained, which became more visible in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic shook the creative and cultural sectors globally and nationally. This meant that we needed to be more flexible and self-reflexive than ever before in our approach to the development of Strategy 2025, as we continued to reflect and rethink on what lies ahead. It is with this in mind that in September 2020, we embarked on a public consultation process designed to evaluate the strengths and challenges of Strategy2020 while gaining insights on the diverse needs, concerns and aspirations of anyone with a direct or indirect involvement and interest in the cultural and creative sectors. Our aim revolved around learning from our work in the past six years so as to build on the strengths and address the current and future challenges that are shaping the cultural ecosystem. From the outset, we agreed that it’s crucial that the next strategy needed to be even more adaptable, pragmatic and ambitious to reflect the turbulent times that we all faced.

By incorporating an open-ended, participatory and rapid qualitative research methodology, we held conversations involving more than 200 people from across socio-demographic backgrounds, localities and roles within Malta’s creative ecology. The research from this nine-month long process started off with thematic discussions with internal stakeholders which included ACM staff and representatives from Public Cultural Organisations. These led to 10 thematic discussions with the general public which largely included representatives from Malta’s cultural and creative sectors with diverse practices. Discussions were held online due to the pandemic situation, however, to maximise engagement, members of the general public were encouraged to submit comments and suggestions before and after the sessions. Five individual interviews with key experts that work or have worked with ACM in the past six years were held in the final phase.

This entire process was aimed at generating solution-oriented recommendations revolving around topics informed from the initial desk research that included reviews of national and European cultural policy documents, and ACM’s already available evidence base, annual reports and conversations with stakeholders. Points of discussion revolved mainly around

issues such as the status of artists and creative practitioners, funding, equality within the sectors, community cultural spaces, sustainability, digitalisation, artistic research, internationalisation, education and cultural governance. The stakeholders and members of the public involved offered valuable ideas on how our Strategy can be better developed and delivered to address such pertinent issues. This all led to a set of key recommendations, underpinning this Strategy for the years to come, being as follows:

- **There is a need to transcend silos, and thus for ACM to facilitate links across sectors and stakeholders by supporting participatory approaches to decision-making within cultural planning.** Engagement needs to be more recognised as part of any process whereby the public, private and voluntary sectors are constantly in dialogue and recognise the long-term value of cultural democracy as a driver for policymaking. Here also lies the importance of addressing the diverse and atypical modes of creative and cultural practices while enabling necessary structures that promote critical thinking.
- **The need to support sustainability within the creative and cultural sectors through measures that reflect new models of creation, production and distribution.** This is interlinked with the significance of resilience - a running theme in most of our discussions, especially in view of the pandemic's economic impact. Our analysis revealed that more than ever before, there was a drive towards seeking and developing alternative platforms and working models that could widen affordability, accessibility, income streams and audience engagement beyond traditional models. This requires critical reflection on the inner dynamics of the sectors, as resilience needs to be rethought in the long-term, to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. For instance, a need to foster a broader understanding of emerging applications of digital technologies in the context of new realities was identified, thus, trends need to be observed on how creative work is presented and how the sectors can be better equipped to face immediate and future challenges.
- **The need to harness the full potential of Malta's vibrant ecology of cultural expression grounded in community-based activity which is localised and socially embedded.** It is evident that we have an opportunity to continue building on our work, to further support community-led activity in a long-term and structured manner, leading to the adoption of a community-based outlook in all of our work and steering away from only ticking boxes. Thus, we are looking towards continuing to increase our commitment in promoting more equitable cultural and creative sectors representative of the diverse social, cultural, political and economic backgrounds. Diversity ought to be celebrated and tapped into as a resource for a multi-faceted creative ecology built on dialogue and collaboration. We need to be mindful of structural inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, class, and disability, that limit the extensive potential of cultural assets within our communities, as we move towards transforming the potential that cultural infrastructure offers for an equitable and accessible source of wellbeing for all.
- **The need for more just distribution of public investment that provides for longer-term structural funding as well as infrastructural development, especially in the sectors' diverse pool of creative talent and expression.** This considers sector-specific needs and atypical working conditions of artists and creative practitioners, including professionals. It involves fostering and promoting cross-sectoral partnerships that lead to artistic activity operating also within contexts from outside cultural and creative sectors. In light of this, our investment would need to be allocated towards measures supporting forms of mentorship, training, professionalisation, research and innovation, that strengthen the future prospects of Malta's creative ecology. Our discussions further illustrated a need for more equitable access to funding opportunities and other investment measures. Propositions include reducing bureaucracy while increasing transparency in the allocation processes, ensuring decent remuneration, and implementing inclusive investment decisions. This means starting off from the people's perspectives, when identifying priorities for public investment so as to reflect multiple realities from within the ecology.
- **The fulfilment of Arts Council Malta's role as a compassionate and proactive cultural leader while being recognised as such by the sectors and the general public.** As an institution, we are expected to provide a support system to artists, practitioners and wider communities engaged in cultural activity, engendering trust, cooperation, accountability and creative experimentation. By investing in, and harnessing relationships built on mutual trust with our stakeholders, we increase the potential to further establish ACM's position as an advocate, facilitator, broker and guardian for the arts and the wider cultural and creative sectors in Malta, as the discussions with our stakeholders including the public, have clearly indicated. Thus, the public, to whom we are primarily accountable, ought to have a voice in the decisions that affect their cultural life. This means assertively working towards adopting participatory governance in our evaluation processes for instance, while leading the national conversation on arts and creativity. We recognise that the arts should be leading change, thus we ought to confident combining bottom-up and top-down approaches within our leadership methods. This confidence needs to be grounded in research, as we continue to adopt an evidence-based outlook to our strategic work. As we build stronger mechanisms for access to knowledge and data, we hope to further instil confidence and trust in our work among our stakeholders.

By taking forward these recommendations, we hope to enact the changes needed and further strengthen the successes of Strategy2020, allowing us to align our work with the vision and mission of the National Cultural Policy 2021, being that of, “embracing culture, for the wellbeing of all” by integrating “culture in national development with a global outlook that contributes towards sustainable development”. We thus identified three overarching themes shaping our strategy:



CARE

We thrive when we connect with others and with our environment. We thrive when we express ourselves and react freely to our context, and the happenings around us.



CREATE

We have an innate urge to give form to our perceptions of the world, through creative interpretation, expression, and narrative.



FLOURISH

Given the right opportunities, we gain the power to excel, but also to shape, and redefine our context through creative expression.

These themes capture our commitment towards cultural rights in shaping our strategy for the years to come. This can be attested from the participatory approach we have adopted and will continue to adopt, to learn from our stakeholders in developing and implementing Strategy 2025. The way in which people access, create, and experience culture is constantly changing, presenting new opportunities and challenges. Our work does not exist in a vacuum, and the pandemic’s impact, global threats and trends taught us that we are always evolving, affecting both the sectors and society at large. The climate change crisis for instance, is considered to be a major force determining our social and our cultural lives for years to come. On the other hand, the pandemic has accelerated the expansion in the use of digital technology across industries, and this was especially true for producing and engaging in creative work. Also, given culture’s symbiosis with social justice, democracy and the economy, the creative and cultural sectors are inherently vulnerable to political and financial challenges that a post-pandemic Europe faces. These translate into uncertainties that relate to artists’ working conditions, mobility, and freedom of expression.

On a national scale, we are obviously also vulnerable to such factors as we operate with and within the global and European community, with international connections being vital to the development of Malta’s cultural and creative sectors.

Our conversations indicated that practitioners have been responding to external challenges, by for instance rethinking their business models or experimenting with digital technology in the artistic process. Nonetheless, together with everyone involved in the sectors, we recognise that difficulties remain, and some might be harder to overcome than others, as everyone grapples with rapidly changing contexts. This Strategy will help us address opportunities and challenges that might lie ahead of us - especially for the wider ecology- by establishing a clear link between cultural and creative practice and the conditions that enable it.

We are recharging our mission with care through practice and to support everyone’s opportunity to create and flourish. We want to set change driven by the principles of cultural rights whereby all citizens have the right to partake in diverse forms of cultural expression in an equitable manner. We know this will happen gradually and is partially dependent on resources available to us as a public entity. This is why we will continue listening and learning from our stakeholders and work together towards placing the arts at the heart of Malta’s future. Our Strategy sets the stage for this to happen.

YOUR FEEDBACK

This document is a draft of our Strategy 2025 which we developed over the past year based on the public consultation and the knowledge we gathered over the past six years. As a public entity we have ensured that we are guided by the National Cultural Policy 2021 throughout this process while also keeping a close eye on international and European policy developments, especially the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022. We now want to hear your thoughts on what we are presenting in this document, how do you think we have addressed the outcomes of the consultation and any ideas that can contribute further to the finalisation of this Strategy. The contributions from stakeholders and members of the public towards shaping this document have been invaluable, and we are confident that your feedback on what we are presenting here will further strengthen our capacity to better support the cultural and creative sectors for the years to come.

We are therefore opening up the conversation and invite you to engage with us through your feedback, ensuring that our proposed strategic actions will truly reflect the ambitions and challenges of the practitioners, organisations and communities that we work with.



LIKE HUMAN RIGHTS,
THE CONCEPT OF
CULTURAL RIGHTS
IS UNIVERSAL,
TRANSCENDING
NATIONS AND SOCIAL
CONTEXTS

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES: THE RIGHT TO CULTURE

OUR COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL RIGHTS IS BASED ON THE EVIDENCE WE HAVE GATHERED OVER THE YEARS AND IS REFLECTIVE OF AN ONGOING PARADIGM SHIFT TAKING PLACE IN EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY. THE CONCLUSIONS FROM OUR PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS FURTHER CONFIRM THE UNPRECEDENTED RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT SOCIETAL CHALLENGES.

This means that our focus will go beyond cultural development and towards a wider understanding of the links between the creative and cultural ecology and the rest of society. Thus, in line with the National Cultural Policy 2021, this Strategy will be contributing towards “addressing the immediate needs of arts and culture and reaffirming the intrinsic value they bring to society” while acknowledging “the role culture has in tackling global issues such as democracy and collective action, climate change, and other matters related to social and environmental sustainability”. Considering this, we are committed towards supporting and promoting the diversity of artistic and cultural expression, following UNESCO’s definition of cultural rights as:

“the right of access to, participation in and enjoyment of culture. This includes the right of individuals and communities to know, understand, visit, make use of, maintain, exchange and develop cultural heritage and cultural expressions, as well as to benefit from the cultural heritage and cultural expressions of others.”

Like human rights, the concept of cultural rights is universal, transcending nations and social contexts. Thus, in the past six years we have started integrating and analysing the principles of cultural rights within our work and research as part of our strategy, leading to the design of the public consultation process informing this Strategy. Our evidence indicates that much like culture, the meaning of cultural rights is relational, contextual, and socially situated, and therefore we recognise the need to be mindful and reflexive of the communities we want to work with in terms of how they choose to engage with arts and culture. We want to deliver work which resonates with the diverse forms of creativity that make up Malta’s artistic landscape during a time when our creative and cultural ecology has been put through unprecedented challenges both locally and globally.

We are now living through a pivotal moment that has brought forth more than ever before, the significance of arts and culture to our overall wellbeing, while also recognising their ever-growing interlinkages with social and environmental issues, as part of our collective efforts towards sustainable development. Our work in developing our strategic goals and actions is in line with the principles of cultural rights as recognised globally, and will contribute further towards the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda echoes the main principle of the 2005 UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which outlines a moral and legal obligation for countries to protect and promote cultural diversity. **At its core is an understanding of the right to culture as a human right where:**

“everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”

In this sense, we adhere to the EU’s position as articulated in the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, which sees culture as a driver for sustainable development, given its crosscutting relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notwithstanding its acknowledged explicit absence in any of the Goals. Nonetheless there is widespread consensus about the transversality of culture in all of the SDGs, especially in relation to inclusive and equitable education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), inclusive and sustainable economic growth, decent work and employment (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), action towards combating climate change and its impacts (SDG 13), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Through this transversality of culture and our planned efforts to increase our contribution to the 2030 Agenda, we will be exploring further cross-sectoral cooperation in our work and the work we support, especially in areas linked to the SDGs, directly or indirectly. We envision a strategic approach that considers the role of arts and culture as well as wider creative expression to bring about transformation and innovation in sectors such as the environment, climate change, healthcare, urban development, disability, social justice, the economy, education, enterprise, international diplomacy, governance and all that lies in between. This ensures that we can continue being contributors to key global conversations in cultural

policy through our involvement in international networks and partnerships, while also influencing and implementing policy strategically at a national level with our local stakeholders.

Ultimately, we acknowledge that the right to culture as a driver for sustainable development has the artists and cultural and creative practitioners at its heart, we recognise their central role in the creation and production of diverse artistic and cultural expressions, while considering their often-atypical working conditions. As in the National Cultural Policy 2021, our work will be inspired by the UNESCO 1980 Recommendations concerning the Status of the Artist and its further developments, including the 2005 UNESCO Convention mentioned previously. Through this Strategy we will continue to support and advocate for working conditions in which artists, and cultural and creative practitioners can create and flourish towards pursuing their ideas and aspirations. Both on a national and on a European scale, research indicates that more needs to be done to improve the professional, economic, social, political, and legal status and protection of artists, cultural and creative professionals and wider practitioners alike. We thus align ourselves with the recommendation in the 2019 UNESCO Report on Culture and Working Conditions for Artists which states that:

“New policy solutions need to be found to address [...] emerging challenges to the status of artists, to their rights to create without censorship or intimidation. To their right to have artistic work supported, distributed and remunerated. To their rights to freedom of movement and of association. To their rights to social protection and to citizens’ rights to participate in the cultural life of their choosing.”

The cultural and creative sectors are heterogeneous and within them are disciplines, sectors and sub-sectors that function within different logics and models, hence our Strategy needs to be flexible and adaptable enough to be implemented through a continuous process of sector-specific understanding while striving towards a more sustainable cultural and creative ecology. The needs, concerns, and ambitions of those involved in Malta’s cultural and creative sectors are at the very foundations of our Strategy - made visible through our participatory process of consultation. This is key to how we approach our work and the work we support, as we truly want to embrace the transversality of cultural rights whilst we consolidate connections and build new relationships with our partners and stakeholder groups.

With cultural rights at the heart of our thinking, we consider the following 10 guiding principles while demonstrating their immediate interlinkages with the SDGs. Built upon our previous strategy, these shall be determining our investment, initiatives, and stakeholder relationships in the coming years:

1. Champion the advancement of the status of the artists, and cultural and creative practitioners.

We will advocate, facilitate, and invest in initiatives, measures and projects that put artists, and cultural and creative practitioners at their heart. We consider the right to artistic freedom and fair working conditions as crucial to enable sustainable growth of the sectors. (SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10)

2. Value the diversity of artistic and cultural expression, access, and participation as integral to Malta’s wider cultural and creative ecology.

We will invest in relevant, innovative, equitable, and enjoyable creative experiences reflecting our cultural and creative ecology, while embracing creative risk, cultural democracy, and intercultural dialogue. We acknowledge that engagement in arts and culture as key to the promotion of “democratic consciousness, individual empowerment and social cohesion”. (SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 11)

3. Nurture cross-sectoral synergies, at local, national, and international levels recognising arts and culture as essential for the wellbeing of all.

We will strengthen existing and initiate new collaborations, partnerships, networks, and other forms of support frameworks with representations and experts from other sectors - including but not limited to - healthcare, education, disability, environment, science, digital technology, urban development, social justice, international relations, enterprise and economy, with special focus on the role of arts and culture at local and regional levels in relation to the liveability, urban design and social innovation in placemaking. This is because we know that arts and culture are key to improving our wellbeing and quality of life. (SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 13)

4. Integrate active and participatory citizenship, ensuring sectoral and public representation in our decision-making processes.

We will enhance participatory cultural governance through citizen engagement which is truly representative of Malta’s diverse cultural and creative ecology across public, private, and voluntary sectors. Sectoral expertise

and experience in relation to arts and culture shall be given due importance in our investment, advocacy, research, and communication decisions. We will be considering engagement with our stakeholders as integral to our process while pragmatically adopting a compassionate and proactive leadership approach. (SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 16)

5. Support education, capacity building, professional development and knowledge exchange, empowering people to flourish in their cultural and creative practice.

We will dedicate investment, advocacy, and facilitation efforts towards the development of knowledge and skills and competences needed by cultural and creative practitioners, to flourish in their sectors. This includes supporting advisory, mentorship, training, and networking opportunities for people from the public, private, and voluntary sectors working in the creative and cultural fields. We will continue to recognise cultural and artistic education at all levels, as key drivers for the continuous advancement of the sectors. We want artists and creatives to be equipped with the necessary skills when working with diverse communities and within other sectors while provoking conversations that encourage rethinking. (SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 11)

6. Build and strengthen strategic partnerships, collaborations, and networks on a national and international level, enabling further opportunities for artists and practitioners.

We will work with strategic partners that share our values and enable us to facilitate opportunities for cultural and creative practitioners. We want to cultivate relationships based on trust and understanding with public, private, and voluntary sector representatives, both nationally and internationally, as well as PCOs as key partners in implementing our strategy. Through our investment and expertise, we will continue supporting our cultural partners in fulfilling their mission with the ultimate goal of building a stronger cultural and creative ecology. (SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11)

7. Support the sectors through proactive public engagement that is accessible, efficient, and informed, with minimal bureaucracy.

We shall continue investing in our brokerage services, knowledge sharing platforms and wide communication strategies to ensure continuous timely and quality engagement with the sectors and the general public. We will strive to widen accessibility to our services and be open to rethinking the approaches we adopt, keeping in mind the diversity of the communities we engage with. Consultation and information services will be underpinned by sectoral expertise, ensuring excellence in the process. Transparency, accountability, and trust are at the core of our approach for public engagement. (SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11)

8. Foster an evidence-based approach which informs our actions through research, evaluation, and debate.


We will implement our strategy and design our actions through an evidence-based approach to ensure ongoing relevance. Knowledge gaps in the creative and cultural sectors need to be identified and addressed through appropriate research plans that are designed in consultation with the sector stakeholders and through the collaborations of academic and professional entities. We will ensure that our evidence base is continuously updated and reflective of ongoing developments in cultural policy, both nationally and internationally. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of our strategy in partnership with our stakeholders will be further developed, forming part of our decision-making and advocacy efforts. (SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 11)

9. Embrace culture as a pillar of sustainable development in terms of its sustainability and interlinkages with the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of wellbeing.

We will support and advocate for practices which enable sustainable development through culture as well as the sustainability of culture itself. As we acknowledge the significant contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to Malta's economy, we will increase efforts towards supporting their economic resilience. We believe that social equity is key to a richer and more just cultural and creative ecology, and this will be incorporated in our work and the work we support. We recognise the essential role of arts and culture in addressing environmental challenges and the fight against climate change. Green practices and reduction of environmental impacts will be amongst our crosscutting priorities in promoting cultural sustainability. We therefore see efforts towards sustainable practices as reaffirming the intrinsic value of culture while contributing towards overall wellbeing. (SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 13)

9. Recognise cultural infrastructure and international cultural relations as integral to the long-term advancement of the cultural and creative sectors.

We acknowledge the need for a structured outlook towards enabling conditions that are conducive to a dynamic cultural and creative ecology that thrives in excellence and equity. For artistic and cultural activity to take place, the right networks, systems, and physical resources need to be available. We consider infrastructure as a prerequisite in improving the educational provision and further professionalisation of the sectors. This is combined with our active role in embracing an open dialogue through our international connections and support of international cultural exchanges, to raise Malta's cultural profile abroad. (SDG 8, SDG 11, SDG 17)



OUR COMMITMENT
TO CULTURAL RIGHTS
IS BASED ON THE
EVIDENCE WE HAVE
GATHERED OVER
THE YEARS AND IS
REFLECTIVE OF AN
ONGOING PARADIGM
SHIFT TAKING PLACE
IN EUROPEAN AND
INTERNATIONAL
CULTURAL POLICY.

OUR VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

OUR VISION

We want the arts to be at the heart of Malta's future.

OUR MISSION

Driven by our commitment to cultural rights, we invest in the arts, to strengthen Malta's creative and cultural ecology.

OUR GOALS

1. Invest in and foster diverse artistic and cultural expression

We recognise freedom of artistic and cultural expression as a right and as essential to the development and inclusive growth of the cultural and creative sectors, as well as a driver towards a more open and creative society. We embrace the interlinkages between cultural diversity and excellence as values that inform each other. Our aim is to invest in experiences that reflect the diversity of Malta's cultural and creative ecology, while adopting a structural approach to improve the quality of artistic processes and outcomes. This requires the building of mutual trust and exchange based on the shared values and ambitions of cultural leaders, audiences, individual artists, and creatives. In the end we want to facilitate and empower the sectors to participate in delivering our mission, while embracing the diverse social backgrounds, heritage, art forms, modes of practice and identities that make Malta's cultural landscape so unique.

2. Support and promote the conditions in which Malta's cultural and creative sectors can flourish

We believe that systemic and structural improvements are key in enabling the sectors to flourish in the long-term. This means investing, advocating, and building knowledge on the conditions which are conducive for the sectors to operate in a culturally, socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable manner. We aim to enhance our stakeholder engagement processes through our work with PCOs, independent sectoral partners, and cultural leaders, as well as cross-sectoral partners towards more decent and equitable working conditions for artists, and cultural and creative practitioners. We want to facilitate conversations between the public, private, and voluntary representatives of the cultural and creative sectors and work towards enabling an infrastructure that accounts for the place-based cultural assets and sector-specific needs across art forms.

3. Advocate and provide for community-led opportunities to engage in arts and culture

Over the past six years, we have witnessed an increase in community-led cultural and creative activities and participation as well as a deeper understanding of the positive impacts of arts and culture upon communities. We acknowledge that this was partially driven by the unprecedented increase in focused public investment, namely through our funding programmes, research projects and initiatives from PCOs. Through a participatory approach, we aim to strengthen our capacity to empower diverse communities (whether rooted in traditional activities or emerging creative practices) to engage in arts and culture, embracing local cultural identities within an evolving multicultural environment. We will also advocate for regional cultural development that facilitates artistic and cultural initiatives and programmes led by communities for communities through formal and informal activities. We will continue to support arts education as a critical pathway to engagement, while bringing artists and schools closer together and emphasising the importance of working with and for young audiences and the elderly. Our investment will be committed towards funding, research, capacity building and partnerships in order to democratise cultural participation, whilst increasing audience engagement and providing resources for cultural collaborations between community leaders and institutions.

4. Strengthen Malta's international cultural relations to continue developing international artistic exchanges and collaborations

Malta has been pursuing an active role in developing an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and in fostering intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In light of this, we aim to play a central role in bringing the policy domains of culture and foreign affairs together through our strategic actions. We want to embrace

an open dialogue in cultural relations with stakeholders targeting bottom-up approaches, local empowerment, participation, and co-creation. We also acknowledge our potential contribution to national bilateral and multilateral programmes which address the role of culture in external relations. We will strengthen Malta's global connectivity as a creative nation through international artistic exchanges and collaborations, allowing for more opportunities to showcase Maltese and Malta-based artists and their artistic works. This is also linked to our ongoing efforts in supporting the professionalisation of Malta's cultural and creative sectors by pursuing greater international market opportunities, partnerships, and accessibility to national and European funding programmes. We will promote and adopt an international outlook in our work and the work we support, maximising international visibility and exchanges of experience and expertise.

5. Nurture cross-sectoral collaborations that contribute to Malta's sustainable development

Our role as an advocate for Malta's cultural and creative sectors entails us to develop and facilitate cross-sectoral collaborations centred around arts and culture, as catalysts for wider sustainable development. National and international research has demonstrated that arts and culture offer exploratory, inquisitive, and critical thinking to the way we view our surroundings and their complex systems, enhancing the ability to adopt multidisciplinary and crosscutting approaches to address contemporary challenges that we face as humans. We shall be guided by the main economic, social, and environmental pillars of the SDGs when addressing and understanding the needs and ambitions of Malta's cultural and creative sectors. We aim to work with our stakeholders including the Ministry responsible for Culture to develop inter-ministerial cooperation, bringing together policy officials and experts specialising in other sectors envisioned to have a direct or indirect impact on the sectors. This will reduce policy fragmentation in the sectors empowered to propose, develop, and implement measures that are strategically aligned with our vision and mission. Furthermore, we want to support and promote bottom-up initiatives that build connections between artistic practice and other specialisations across a range of communities.

6. Facilitate cultural partners including Public Cultural Organisations to build and strengthen organisational capacity

Our legal remit entrusts us with the responsibility to strengthen the organisations listed as Public Cultural Organisations (PCOs). We shall advise and support PCOs in their decision-making towards their common objective to commit and foster an inclusive and sustainable growth for Malta's cultural and creative ecology through their investment in the sector. We aim to facilitate PCOs in strengthening their human and technical capacities to address the demands of our dynamic sectors. We will be leading a network of PCOs to increase collaboration between them while sharing resources and expertise in delivering their programmes in line with Strategy 2025. We shall also address the needs and objectives of our independent cultural partners that we support through our public investment. We want to provide more opportunities for our cultural partners to become economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable while advancing artistic ambitions by strengthening capacity building and facilitate networking platforms.



OUR LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ARTS COUNCIL MALTA (ACM) IS MALTA'S NATIONAL AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS. ITS CENTRAL TASK IS THAT OF EFFECTIVELY FUNDING, SUPPORTING, AND PROMOTING THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS IN MALTA.

On the 12th of May 2015, the Maltese Parliament approved a new legal structure for ACM. This law, Act 15 of 2015, sets down that the Council's duty is to develop and promote Malta's cultural and creative sectors both nationally and internationally through all forms of creative expression and to increase the accessibility of the public to culture and the arts.

The Council's objectives, are to:

- (a) advocate and be a strategic leader and catalyst for the cultural and creative sectors, through the implementation of strategies, with a particular focus on:
 - (i) knowledge-based cultural and creative development;
 - (ii) education and training;
 - (iii) intelligence and data building;
 - (iv) business development, funding and investment;
 - (v) diversity and communities; and
 - (vi) internationalisation.
- (b) promote innovation in the sectors and stimulate a creative ecosystem for the generation of contemporary creative content;
- (c) initiate, develop and promote strategies, programmes and initiatives necessary to enhance the performance of the sectors;
- (d) act as a broker for the cultural and creative sectors and as a bridge with other sectors;
- (e) promote intellectual property in the sector;
- (f) ensure the development of a sustainable creative economy;
- (g) facilitate and promote the sustainable development of creative individuals and organisations;
- (h) facilitate the participation in, and access to, cultural and creative activity;
- (i) foster active and participatory citizenship in culture and promote cultural inclusion, equality, diversity and the freedom of creative expression;
- (j) increase the understanding, appreciation, enjoyment, and expression of culture; and
- (k) safeguard the dynamic development of those cultural characteristics, including intellectual, linguistic, traditional, and folkloric, which identify the Maltese people.

OUR FUNCTIONS

The Council's functions are also outlined in its legal framework within Act 15 of 2015 and can be summarised as being:

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- (a) **to advocate** for the cultural and creative sectors and advise Government on matters that directly or indirectly have an impact on the sectors
 - (a) **to support** the sectors through information and advisory services, national and international collaborations, promotion of intellectual property rights, data collection and management as well as facilitation of cultural infrastructure
 - (c) **to develop and facilitate** the implementation of strategies to professionalise the sectors, assist the sectors in accessing national and international markets, support relevant industry networks and platforms, promote cultural participation, develop particular sub-sectors, encourage excellence and innovation, enhance the role of the sectors in education as well as in fostering citizenship and creativity
 - (d) **to be the national research point** for the sectors by conducting and disseminating research for the sectors, and collaborating on national and international research projects and data gathering exercises
 - (e) **to invest** in the sectors by developing and managing funding programmes, grants, schemes, awards, loans and other incentives and facilities as well as strengthening the capacity of Public Cultural Organisations



WE WANT THE ARTS
TO BE AT THE HEART
OF MALTA'S FUTURE

OUR STAKEHOLDERS

WHEN WE THINK OF A CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECOLOGY, WE ENVISION VARIOUS NETWORKS OF ARTISTS, CREATIVES, PRODUCERS, PARTICIPANTS, AUDIENCES, VOLUNTEERS, ACTIVISTS, POLICYMAKERS, INSTITUTIONS, ENTREPRENEURS, FUNDERS, AND SPONSORS INTERACTING WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF CULTURAL PRACTICE. JUST LIKE IN THE FIELD OF NATURAL SCIENCES, THE TERM 'ECOLOGY' EVOKES A HIGHLY HETEROGENOUS ENVIRONMENT WHICH STILL HAS A CONTINUOUS NEED TO BE INTEGRATED, INTERCONNECTED AND INTERDEPENDENT. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION FLOURISHES WITHIN A THRIVING CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ECOLOGY THAT ENABLES COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, CO-CREATION AND CROSS-FERTILISATION, THROUGH OPEN DIALOGUE AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

Arts Council Malta is part of this vast and diverse ecology, and our mission is to strengthen this very ecology, thereby asserting the importance of our stakeholder relationships. We want to build, maintain, and also enable such relationships as we collaborate and encourage collaboration, hold ourselves accountable and promote accountability, advocate and support advocacy, invest and encourage investment. Our strategy is founded on trust between our stakeholders as we based our ideas on the work conducted in the past six years and the consultations held, especially the recent ones. We value trust in the artists, and creative and cultural practitioners whose voice continuously shapes our work and whose work we support and invest in through our programmes and initiatives. We value trust in the public, who are engaged in conversations that challenge and stimulate cultural institutions and practitioners while entrusting us with the public funds invested. We value trust in the public entities who, through strong value-based commitments and forward-looking cultural policies, continue with unstinting public investment in the cultural and creative sectors.

We believe that participatory cultural governance should be central to how we manage our stakeholder relationships. This approach based on the principles of Sustainable Development, maintains that governance responsibilities are shared among different stakeholders, be they Regional Councils, Local Councils, Public Cultural Organisations, other public entities, non-governmental organisations, local communities or artists. It ultimately means that policymakers, the cultural and creative sectors, and the public are included in our decision-making processes. This will be facilitated through the development of sectoral committees, think tanks and working groups, whose expertise will complement that of our management so as to ensure sustainable decisions that engage those who are most likely to be impacted by them. Inter-ministerial committees will also be formed to enable cross-sectoral cooperation at a Government level.

In implementing our Strategy 2025, we will focus on building stronger partnerships with and between the eight identified groups, as their insights and concerns will shape our strategic actions.

- Cultural and creative practitioners
- Communities
- Public Cultural Organisations
- Academic, Non-Governmental, private sector consultancies
- Public entities with an interest in culture
- Ministry responsible for Culture
- Ministries with an interest in culture
- European and international partners and networks

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS

These include all artistic and creative individuals and organisations active in the cultural and creative sectors, across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. According to the Arts Council Malta Act, their activities are identified "as a set of culturally significant, knowledge-based activities, born of creativity and cultural capital, that encompass the cycles of creation, production, distribution and preservation of cultural and creative goods and services, and which have the potential to generate cultural and social development, economic growth and employment".

COMMUNITIES

The communities that make up the contemporary social and cultural fabric in Malta and Gozo engage in forms of artistic and cultural expression spanning on an array of identities, disciplines and traditions. The very core of our approach to public engagement is thus shaped by our commitment towards the cultural rights of everyone. These rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. In our actions, we aim to enable and support an open and participatory dialogue with all communities. In the spirit of cultural democracy, we recognise the right of every person to participate in the cultural life of their choice, have access to a wide range of cultural experiences, and be empowered to nurture their creative talents and be active citizens. The diversity of artistic and cultural expression needs to be safeguarded, supported, and celebrated as it fosters critical thinking, equity, and innovation which, in turn, contributes towards wider social wellbeing and cohesion. Through meaningful community engagement, we aim to contribute towards sustainable community development, which is also interlinked with our commitment towards continuing cross-sectoral collaboration.

PUBLIC CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Public Cultural Organisations (PCOs) as listed in the Second Schedule of the Arts Council Malta Act share a common objective to invest public funding in culture and the arts, to foster creativity, social well-being and economic activity. ACM is entrusted by law to monitor and review their strategies, financial estimates, and reports. ACM will continue leading the network of all PCOs to increase inter-PCO collaboration and to share resources and expertise. PCOs enjoy guaranteed independence in artistic programming, reflecting the principles of diversity and freedom of cultural expression. The following organisations have been listed as PCOs in the National Cultural Policy 2021:

- Festivals Malta
- Fondazzjoni Kreattività
- Kor Malta
- Malta Philharmonic Orchestra
- Mediterranean Conference Centre
- MICAS (Malta International Contemporary Arts Space)
- Pjazza Teatru Rjal
- Teatru Malta
- Teatru Manoel
- Valletta Cultural Agency
- ŻfinMalta

ACADEMIC, NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTANCIES

These include consultants and consultancies the Council works with, through collaborations or public tenders with specialisations that are relevant to the services and exchanges needed. This includes focused research and evaluation to gain specialist insight and independent analysis, specific solutions for strategic development and implementation, business development, training and capacity building programmes, design and rethinking of funding programmes as well as improving our operational capacity amongst others, as required. Through an intersectoral and interdisciplinary perspective, we value the diverse potential and extensive knowledge from academics and academic institutions; voluntary organisations and associations; business advisors and sectoral consultants.

PUBLIC ENTITIES WITH AN INTEREST IN CULTURE

The Council will adopt a holistic approach through collaboration and cooperation with public entities falling under the Ministry responsible for Culture which have cultural remit, as well as other entities within other Ministries. We have worked and intend to work with entities such as the Creativity Trust, Malta Enterprise, Malta Film Commission, Public Broadcasting Services (PBS), the Local Government Division, the Economic Policy Department, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the National Statistics Office, MCST, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti, the National Book Council, MCAST, and the Malta Visual and Performing Arts School, amongst others.

MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR CULTURE

The Ministry responsible for Culture oversees the implementation of the national cultural policy and other national and international programmes and conventions. As the Council is one of the entities responsible for the implementation of the national cultural policy, working closely with the Ministry is crucial while still maintaining an arm's length principle. Whereas the Ministry responsible for culture has traditionally been responsible for policies in arts and national heritage, other related policy areas related to film, broadcasting, crafts, publishing, libraries, archives, and arts education have often been developed by other Ministries. In addition, new areas in the creative economy and cultural policy linked to science and technology will become integrated within a framework that embraces cross-sectoral cooperation.

MINISTRIES WITH AN INTEREST IN CULTURE

In order to increase policy cooperation for the cultural and creative sectors across different ministries, we will broker collaborations with ministries at a cross-sectoral level. Together with the Culture Directorate within the Ministry responsible for Culture, ACM will bring together policy units from different ministries that have a direct and indirect impact on the sectors. This collaborative national cultural policy objective, aims to reduce policy fragmentation in the sectors empowered to propose, develop, and implement measures towards sustainable development. Sectors such as the environment, urban planning, human rights, social justice, disability, technology, healthcare, science, and the economy shall be represented through this interministerial cooperation.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND NETWORKS

These include associations, agencies and multi-stakeholder networks operating on a wider European and/or international level which have a direct remit in the cultural and creative sectors. The Council is represented as a member in some key international networks and organisations such as IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies), EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture), IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts), the Association for the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends and the Salzburg Global Seminar amongst others. We intend to increase our representation in a way that further contributes towards our strategic goals in the coming years. We are also developing international and European partnerships with reputable and sustainable cultural leaders to enhance our operational capacity in developing methods and initiatives to support Malta's cultural and creative sectors.



STRATEGIC AREAS

THE GOALS OF STRATEGY 2025 WILL BE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH SIX STRATEGIC AREAS WHICH ARE INTERLINKED WITH EACH OTHER. EACH STRATEGIC AREA HAS ITS OVERALL OBJECTIVE, SET OF PRIORITIES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS THAT ALL AIM TO FULFIL OUR VISION AND MISSION FOR THE YEARS TO COME.

The strategic areas, that were designed and will be implemented by the Funding & Strategy Team within Arts Council Malta are:

- Public Investment
- Diversity and Communities
- Education and Development
- Internationalisation
- Creative Entrepreneurship
- Research and Evaluation

PUBLIC INVESTMENT

As ACM, we believe in the public value of arts and culture, and their power to enrich the lives of everyone experiencing them. The evidence we gathered on the impact of our investment in past six years, is indeed reflective of this as we have witnessed and listened to the encouraging stories of artists and communities influenced by the work we supported. Thus, in recognising our accountability towards the public, we want to broaden our approach to investment by going beyond our funding portfolio, as first and foremost we consider cultural and creative engagement as a right. We shall therefore be widening the scope of how we allocate public investment as well as how we advocate for public investment. We want to achieve this by further diversifying our funding processes as well as other forms of investment mechanisms we shall lead, develop, or support.

Over the coming years we will invest strategically in work which supports our goals and guiding principles in alignment with cultural rights and overall sustainable development. At the centre of our investment decisions, we shall consider the professional, social, and economic status and conditions of artists, creatives, and cultural practitioners. From project funding for an experimental artwork to seed capital for a creative start-up, we want to structure investment that matches the sector-specific needs of artistic expression and production. We also know that investment in arts and culture can bring about wider social benefits, contribution to economic growth, and sustainable communities. We plan to invest more in mentorship, capacity building, professional development, training and knowledge sharing of organisations and individuals alike to improve the quality and potential in their artistic work and operations. We want to champion arts and culture from across the voluntary, private, and public sectors not only through direct investment but also through our development efforts, building connections between the everyday cultural participation in communities, organisations we support and the wider sectors.

Our investment will also be aimed towards building new partnerships, collaborations and growing our knowledge, skills and networks so as to support and promote the conditions in which Malta's cultural and creative sectors can flourish. We will work closely with those we support through constructive monitoring and reporting requirements, and provide the necessary support while encouraging good practice throughout the process. We will continue to identify the structural challenges and opportunities facing the sectors and address them by leading conversations that bring people together from across sectors. We will advocate for the value of arts and culture with other public entities and stakeholders, to support the sustainability, innovation and growth of the cultural and creative ecology and take the lead in placing arts at the centre of Malta's future. Indeed we aim to collaborate with PCOs towards providing a support structure with a relative measure of production and output, to improve working conditions and sustain the Status of the Artist. This requires continuous learning, discussions, and rethinking on our funding programmes and investment decisions through research and knowledge building, to continue strengthening the case for public investment in arts and culture.

We will keep adopting the principles of open competition, accountability, and transparency in our funding and overall investment decisions. We are committed to providing all relevant information about the different funding programmes through our digital channels and brokerage services in general. All guidelines and application forms will be regularly reviewed and published online while ensuring maximum accessibility. Through our newly revamped and continuously evolving Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, application procedures will include clear steps and outline our expectations for each and every part of the application, with all deadlines for the different funding programmes published in advance as part of a yearly calendar. At ACM we ensure that the decision-making process is carried out in the most effective and meticulous way. That is the reason we will continue engaging different independent evaluators to assess funding applications. Concurrently we will be exploring approaches that lighten bureaucracy through investment in digitalisation and simplification procedures to be rolled out across our funding programmes.

We invest in artists, creative professionals and practitioners in order to develop and deliver artistic excellence and contribute to our strategic goals that support growth, diversity, and training in the cultural and creative sectors. The benefits of public investment are effectively utilised to steer growth and development. This may take place in the traditional model of funding, which includes multi-annual grants, strategic funding, and development funding. Through our partnerships and stakeholder engagement we will be initiating conversations on alternative funding sources such as match funding, crowdfunding, preferential loans, trusts, and other models which favour participatory approaches.

Multi-annual grants consist of agreements over a number of years with creative professionals that address the priorities outlined in this Strategy with a long-term vision. Strategic funding programmes are our main tool to implement our goals as set by the Strategy. Development funding programmes provide the necessary environment to provide the opportunity for us to invest in the development of quality-driven creative work which pushes the artists' and the sector's boundaries for more engaging creative experiences. These programmes will essentially focus on what matters most to artists – funds that support them in taking creative risks to develop new work through research, experimentation, and collaboration.

We will ensure our public investment decisions will be equitable, reflecting the principles of cultural rights, embracing diversity of artistic and cultural expression.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Over the next years we plan to direct structured public investment towards sustainable cultural and artistic practices that contribute towards the development of the sectors and overall wellbeing . We also aim to advocate for increases in public expenditure in arts and culture through evidence-based and participatory approaches.

PRIORITIES

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

We will invest in a diverse portfolio to support the development of the cultural and creative sectors. We will continue to provide access to financial grants and incentives through competitive funding programmes. We will pursue a fair system whereby all proposals will undergo a selection process that is both accountable and transparent throughout. We will adopt a research and evidence-based approach to explore funding models that cater for the evolving needs and aspirations of our society.

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

Investment mechanisms may be refined in terms of time and diverse project needs. This need clearly emerged from our Strategy 2025 consultation process. As a result, we will be identifying multiple mechanisms, beyond the funding programmes, which sustain the long-term development and outcomes of creative projects occurring over a span of time.

ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

We will invest in a support structure to encourage new and repeat applicants to access our funding programmes. We believe that emerging and established artists have a right to access public investment and we want to support them in achieving excellent outcomes. We shall explore methods to foster collaboration and co-creation between emerging and established artists. We know that the application phase may serve as a learning curve and it might also include unnecessary bureaucracies. Guided by this thought we will explore ways of maintaining mutual trust, transparency, and accountability through minimal bureaucracy and more openness.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are aware that emerging and established artists and practitioners each have their own specific needs. Notwithstanding, each individual and organisation can bring value to the sectors through dynamic, creative, and innovative methods. We will establish new ways to enable them to unleash their potential through specific skill sets at different stages of their professional development.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

The COVID-19 global pandemic has had a direct impact on the cultural and creative sectors. Through our policies and regular conversations with PCOs and wider stakeholders, our main target is to safeguard and uphold the livelihood of artists and practitioners. This mechanism would be in line with the objectives of steering the sector towards more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive models, echoing the vision of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development from the environmental, social and economic perspectives.

DIGITAL PRESENCE

We will keep on investing in our CRM system to provide a simplified application process to become accessible to a wider audience through its digital platform. We will invest in the online system to provide centralised information to internal users with the aim to facilitate communication between internal users and beneficiaries. The online CRM system will facilitate the monitoring of active projects and will provide the opportunity to disseminate information related to ongoing projects and open calls for application. The consultation process indicates the need to improve our digital presence and to give exposure to projects supported by the Council. With this in mind, we will be exploring ways to showcase the activities supported by ACM.

EU PROJECTS

The EU is an invaluable source of project funding for the cultural and creative sectors. We will strategically utilise EU funding programmes with the aim to further develop our portfolio of EU-funded projects that reflect and address the goals and targets set out in this Strategy 2025, aligned with Malta's National Cultural Policy 2021, and guided by the European Commission's priorities 2019-2024¹, the EU's Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022² and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations³.

Through the effective utilisation of EU-funded projects, we strive to further invest in Malta's cultural and creative sectors through the following horizontal overarching objectives:

- Enabling strategic connections, networks and creative partnerships with other European/international creatives and cultural organisations;
- Strengthening the role, performance, and institutional capacity of our workforce and that of PCOs, with a view to provide an enhanced service delivery;
- Building bridges and synergies with other policy areas and cross-cutting themes, such as sustainability, environment, digitalisation, cultural rights, diversity;
- Contributing to the sectors' sustainable economic growth, employment and innovation dimensions.

Creative Europe is the primary European funding instrument in support of cultural and creative projects in Europe. However, due to the creative and cultural sectors' transversal nature, at Arts Council Malta we shall explore other direct and indirect EU funding programmes, such as the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), Horizon Europe, the European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean (ENI CBC MED), EuropeAid, Europe for Citizens, and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), amongst others.

We shall collaborate further with the Creative Europe Desk Malta to promote awareness and understanding of the Creative Europe programme, ensuring that advice and support is continuously provided to local artists and cultural organisations, with the aim to increase their active participation in international collaboration projects.

The priorities for EU projects shall be aligned with other priorities for public investment towards strengthening

¹ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/priorities_en

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13948-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0029&from=EN>

international cultural relations, social cohesion, and wellbeing through culture, and the professionalisation of the sectors and their workforce including the challenges and opportunities encountered by the digital shift.

ACTIONS

1. Develop and continuously review our funding programmes and investment mechanisms based on ongoing public consultation, engagement, and evaluation so as to address the sector-specific needs and concerns with the Status of the Artist at the core of our thinking.
2. Enhance standard operating procedures for fund management and assess existing procedures with the aim to minimise bureaucracy and enhance communication with the public on our monitoring and reporting requirements.
3. Embark on an evaluation and consultation process to identify investment measures that allow for more transparency and healthier competition. This includes reviewing and analysing the evaluation processes and application system to identify areas that need improvement to provide more equitable funding, better feedback and be flexible to respond to the changing needs of the sectors.
4. Enhance our online CRM system for all public investment initiatives administered by ACM to be utilised for the entire duration of the funding process including application, evaluation, award, implementation, mentoring, monitoring, and reporting stages. This will ensure a greener, smoother, and more efficient process throughout.
5. Explore and establish alternative funding mechanisms that complement existing ones, based on participatory approaches enhancing recognition on the public value of arts and culture such as crowdfunding, match funding, micro-grants, and preferential bank loans. This requires an exploratory process with our existing and future stakeholders through a cross-sectoral approach.
6. Establish co-funding mechanisms for our portfolio through interministerial collaborations addressing specific target groups within the cultural and creative sectors.
7. Engage sectoral support coordinators with specialist knowledge and experience to monitor and guide the implementation of funded projects and work we support through other forms of public investment.
8. Pursue the continuous support towards Gozo and its positioning as a distinctive cultural region through collaborative investment in its cultural development taking a localised approach.
9. Strengthening relationships between the PCOs and independent sectors by serving as a role model and offering continuous guidance whenever necessary through think tanks, working groups and consultation exercises.
10. Establish sectoral steering committees with representatives from the public, private, and voluntary sectors that form part of the cultural and creative ecology that can offer advice and guidance in our investment decision-making processes.
11. Develop a portfolio of EU funded projects, to develop and expand our international cultural profile for the benefit of the sectors. This includes the establishment of a co-financing mechanism that covers the self-financing component of EU funded projects.
12. Developing effective and suitable international multi-stakeholder partnerships and consortia to bid for multi-country project-based work, by identifying the right partners, and building a relationship to prepare robust EU project proposals.

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITIES

WE BELIEVE THAT CULTURE CAN BE A CATALYST TO EMPOWER DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES – WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE, TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT, VALUED, AND EQUITABLY SUPPORTED TO REALISE THEIR CULTURAL RIGHTS. DIVERSITY ACKNOWLEDGES AND VALUES DIFFERENCES. DIVERSITY ENCOURAGES AND ENABLES CONTINUED CONTRIBUTION – WITHIN AN INCLUSIVE CONTEXT: THAT WELCOMES EVERYONE. WHILE INCLUSIVENESS ENSURES THAT EVERYONE CAN TAKE PART, DIVERSITY ENSURES THAT EVERYONE CAN TAKE PART ON THEIR OWN TERMS. THIS NURTURES WIDER CULTURAL PARTICIPATION THAT REMOVES BARRIERS, SAFEGUARDS EVERYONE’S RIGHT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ENJOY THEIR INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

In these communities, we enable and support authenticity and critical thinking, promote awareness of diverse narratives, and acknowledge challenges and opportunities. We want to ensure that everyone, whoever they are, irrespective of sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief, and from whichever walk of life they set out from, has access to culture and the arts, and the benefits and wellbeing they generate. In these communities, power is shared, and we will work with all entities, organisations, individuals – locally, nationally and internationally –, across sectors, whose key responsibilities can support culture’s central role in the building of a fairer, more prosperous and resilient society. We will also work with all those who are embedded within local communities and have the resources to leverage cultural, social, and content innovation for the benefit of communities and society. This approach we believe, can be enhanced by advocating and investing in measures that increase active cultural participation, strengthen audience development and support overall artistic development through community-led initiatives.

We will enable, support, and advocate for the realisation of cultural rights, and for greater diversity, equity, and inclusiveness – as fundamentally embedded components of our strategy.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To enable arts and culture to reach people more deeply in every aspect of their lives instilling a more confident, diverse and innovative cultural and creative ecology, which is valued by - and in tune with - the communities it serves.

PRIORITIES

INCLUSIVENESS

We want to enable and advocate for radical inclusiveness in the cultural and creative sectors that operate with the ethics of care – through sustainable practices. This entails the sharing of power, the rethinking of long-established dominant narratives, the reduction of poverty, enhanced holistic wellbeing and the flourishing of every person. We will work with PCOs as cultural leaders that have a responsibility to widen access, increase diversity and ensure programming practices that are inclusive and reflect the changes in society.

WELLBEING AND COHESION

Culture needs to be present at the table as an equal partner with the other stakeholders towards mitigating exclusion for the strengthening of cohesion and wellbeing. We shall prioritise collaboration, knowledge building, advocacy and research that address policy crossovers that mainstream culture in social inclusion, integration and diversity policies and strategies.

COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

As ACM we shall facilitate community cultural development, that enables reinvented spaces of exchange, creation and socio-ecologies relevant to the community, and promotes profound transformations of lifestyle, circularity, and regeneration – rethinking current models of operation, and addressing environmental and social sustainability. We aim to empower non-governmental operators through the optimal use of underutilised resources, with an emphasis on local and regional cultural development. Regional cultural development will identify and valorise elements of distinctiveness and uniqueness in their various forms and expressions as well as promote a continuous process of evolution and change to enable culture to adapt to social changes and to effectively drive them.

ACTIONS

1. We shall ensure that our investment and funding are aligned with the the values of cultural diversity and sustainable community development by reviewing and evaluating our structures and guidelines where needed, based on ongoing public consultation.
2. Implementation of a Right to Culture sensitisation campaign, including wide dissemination of the Right to Culture resource kit, training, and visits to educational institutions
3. Implementation of regional cultural strategies through continuous engagement with public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders operating on local and regional levels.
4. Investment in safeguarding and promoting the diversity of artistic and cultural expression in cultural heritage as well as heritage-led regeneration and innovation (including the teaching of language, history, culture, and cultural mediation).
5. Initiation and nurturing of cross-sectoral consultation, networking, collaboration, shadowing, continuous knowledge-building – with a focus on cultural rights.
6. Promotion and support of active research on social equity in the cultural and creative sectors, with a particular focus on access, representation, participation, working conditions, precariousness, career paths, impact of values, attitudes, interests, intersectionalities, and gender issues, and of diverse groups.
7. Provision of access support (including assistance to access funds, and social assistance), fiscal measures, linguistic services, due facilities (including braille, and speech text), specific allowances, touring, special performances, and multi-sensory and tactile exhibits.
8. Support the introduction of community cultural mediators at a local government level who can facilitate creative activity to reflect the more diverse cultures in our communities.
9. Promotion and support of arts on prescription, with a special focus on mental health, equitable well-being, and politics of care by collaborating with arts and non-arts organisations.
10. Invest and advocate for the mainstreaming of cultural participation and access for people with disabilities through the appropriate training of staff, investment in resources, infrastructure and provision of services such as relaxed and signed performances and expanding digital services to provide the best cultural experience for all.
11. Promotion and support of digital accessibility as part of post-pandemic recovery plans, with a particular focus on innovative incorporation in cultural heritage, creative expression and audience engagement.



EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF ARTS COUNCIL MALTA IS THAT OF LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS UPON WHICH CULTURAL AND CREATIVE OPERATORS CAN FUNCTION AND THRIVE. EDUCATION LIES AT THE HEART OF THIS PROCESS, NURTURING AND SUPPORTING THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION THAT THE ARTS HAVE IN THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS, AS WELL AS THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AT LARGE. EXPOSING STUDENTS TO CREATIVITY, ALSO IN THE TEACHING OF OTHER CORE SUBJECTS, HAS BEEN SHOWN TO PROMOTE TRANSVERSAL SKILLS SUCH AS CRITICAL THINKING, COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND REAL-WORLD PROBLEM SOLVING.

In addition to supporting formal educational institutions, we will explore initiatives aimed at supporting informal and lifelong education from early childhood to adulthood. Our aim is to nurture both quality education of the arts, as well as a wider appreciation of the arts and their cross-section with different fields of knowledge and practice.

Our vision for the growth of the sector also entails other forms of development, outside the direct sphere of education. We are committed to support the continuous development of artists and practitioners practicing within various settings, be it traditional or grassroots practice, to those working within the public, private, voluntary sectors or academia. This support will adopt a cross-sectoral and holistic approach whilst considering current and future trends, as identified by the Council of Europe conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, primarily; the digital shift, globalisation, growing societal diversity and changing working environments.

We will advocate for key stakeholders in education to view creativity, culture and the arts as pathways to viable careers. Given the trends and changes in career boundaries, the creative pedagogies - teaching for creativity and creative learning that sustain education for the arts - are fast becoming a necessary skills set for every student as more and more future jobs will involve creative application, digital communication skills and creative entrepreneurship. These are very much an integral part of the range of 21st Century skills students will need to acquire as active learners.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

We aim to allocate public investment towards education programmes that ensure accessible, equitable and high-standard arts education and participation from early childhood to lifelong learning while facilitating collaborations between cultural operators and education institutions. Continuous career development in the cultural and creative sectors within a wide range of settings shall also be facilitated.

PRIORITIES

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Through ongoing collaborations with key players in the field of education we will support the nurturing of a deeper appreciation for pedagogical practices within the field of arts education and arts within formal and informal education settings. Our aim is for those active in the liminal spaces between arts, creativity, education, and community to have deeper knowledge of best pedagogical practices while fostering an environment of true, meaningful collaboration which safeguards participants, educators and creative practitioners alike.

WIDER ARTS APPRECIATION

We will focus on lifelong education, from early childhood to adult education, as well as on formal, informal, and non-formal education as platforms that contribute towards the holistic development of different members of society. Furthermore, we believe that the best way to increase and diversify our audience is through effective engagement of new practitioners. Our strategy includes actions aimed at engaging the very young and their families up to the older generation. These actions will aim to increase the likelihood of students engaging in artistic training and careers, and grow audiences and appreciation for the arts.

NETWORK APPROACH TO ARTS EDUCATION

A network approach to arts education involves players from different sectors including private, public, academia and the voluntary sectors including PCOs. We will strive to lead by example in establishing initiatives that bring together players from different entities and disciplines. This promotes a wider application of arts and creativity and promotes transversal

skills and knowledge. Whilst working towards a broad engagement in the arts, we will also strive to raise the standard of education in the arts, to support the development of local talent and facilitate the transition into a viable and fruitful career.

CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE ARTS

We will work towards facilitating career development for young people and students of the arts and creative disciplines through collaborations with the main stakeholders in the field of youth, employment, and entrepreneurship. In doing so, we aim to support young people in embarking on careers in the arts and in investing in their portfolio, as well as to support the building of networks and partnerships. We will work towards providing resources and intellectual spaces for professionals within cultural and creative fields to explore, experiment, discuss and invest in their growth.

ACTIONS

1. Advocate for greater synergy between the Ministry responsible for Culture and the Ministry for Education to facilitate a network approach, partnerships, and investment in resources through the strengthening of current, collaborations and initiatives and establishment of new ones.
2. Invest in the capacity building of organisations active in arts education through pedagogical training for educators and creative professionals working in education and communities to promote professionalisation.
3. Strengthen opportunities through which PCOs can collaborate in the provision of high-quality education and outreach programmes, demonstrating the value of transdisciplinarity and knowledge-sharing. This may include, but is not limited to, new productions targeting early childhood and the elderly.
4. Ensure that every child and young person has access to quality artistic and cultural productions, thereby promoting greater engagement and participation. This will be done through age-specific initiatives such as a curated programme for educational institutions and a non-curated programme for older students and young people in the community.
5. Promote access within communities, for example through collaborative programmes with the justice system, social care, Local Councils, and healthcare organisations to promote active participation in the community.
6. Collaborate with the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority to conduct research on the best way to introduce accreditation and licensing of arts education institutions to promote a high standard for institutions and curricula.
7. Continue to invest in talented young artists to develop their skills and artistic practice through a system of funding, mentoring programmes, and scholarships through collaborations with other relevant entities, as well as through access to work or paid apprenticeship schemes for new graduates in the arts.
8. Work towards the communication of the personal and social impacts of arts education in order to raise public awareness of its value. Relevant media campaigns and brokerage work will encourage support for arts education in the public and private sectors.
9. Facilitate networking opportunities between artists and players within other fields such as science, technology, media, education, voluntary organisations and commercial enterprises. This with the aim of promoting interdisciplinary work and enterprises through networking sessions, workshops, and collaborative initiatives.
10. Encourage continuous lifelong professional training, in line with the developing contexts and environments in which artists and creatives are operating, such as training in entrepreneurial mindset, digital technology and other specialised training.
11. Invest in training of cultural leaders and employees in the cultural sector including, but not limited to, public employees working in the sector to continue promoting the value of the sector and its employees.
12. Introduce schemes to support research in the sector by supporting artists wishing to take a sabbatical period of up to one year, through the allocation of a basic income, following agreed outcomes and objectives.

INTERNATIONALISATION

WE RECOGNISE THAT GIVEN OUR GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT, FORMING AND MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR MALTA'S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS TO FLOURISH. WE ENVISION STRONGER INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS ENABLING LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECTORS, THROUGH NEW INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGE. IN TODAY'S GLOBALISED WORLD, HAVING AN INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK TO FORMS OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE BECOMES A PREREQUISITE FOR PROFESSIONALISATION AND FURTHER GROWTH. WE ENVISION COLLABORATIONS BASED ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, TRUST AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, WHEREBY ARTS AND CREATIVITY TRANSCEND BORDERS.

We envision Malta's cultural and creative practitioners becoming more engaged in international exchanges and co-productions in the coming years. Given the constant evolution of the cultural and creative sectors, we also understand that there is the need to develop the skills of creative professionals to engage internationally. This includes reaching out to new and diverse audiences across the globe, and sustaining the growth of cultural and creative entrepreneurs. In addition, there are also spill-over effects in other sectors, including nation branding, development, tourism, and trade.

As an entity responsible in the implementation of the National Cultural Policy 2021, we shall advocate for a more open approach in cultural relations. This encompasses an open dialogue with multiple stakeholders that engages and mobilises citizens, artists, civil society, and cultural institutions. Our strategy will be directed towards building trust and nurturing relationships across national borders, and supporting and facilitating cross-border creative experimentation and new international cultural projects. Our existing and future roles within international networks as a national entity will also contribute towards global conversations shaping the trajectories of international cultural relations.

We embrace the guiding principles of the EU Agenda in international cultural relations, as established in the Joint Communication 'Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations'. This restates the EU's commitment to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, and aims at encouraging cultural cooperation between EU and partner countries, by "promoting a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental rights."^{4 5}

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Strengthening Malta's international cultural relations by building trust and understanding through diverse artistic and cultural expressions that foster international networking, collaborations, and exchanges.

PRIORITIES

INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY

Internationalisation brings about greater visibility of Malta's creative talent abroad as well as new audiences. It is also a form of nation branding, which contributes towards sustainable tourism and diplomatic relations. It will be a priority to focus on internationally showcasing and promoting Malta's excellent and contemporary artistic work.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

This will lead to greater experimentation and innovation as more international artists create works with Malta's artists and practitioners, thus leading to sharing their work on a global level. We aim to support the increase of Maltese partners in European and other international cultural projects, by setting up coproduction and partnership targets.

ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

More of Malta's artists and cultural practitioners will gain experiences in an international professional environment, through the sharing of knowledge, resources and expertise while expanding their networks and reach.

⁴ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and The Council: Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016)

⁵ International Cultural Relations are also one of the five priorities of the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022.

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

Exchanges of cultural experiences between international and Malta's artistic, cultural and creative practitioners, shall drive an increase in touring projects, artistic residencies, presence in international fairs, festivals, conferences, and biennales.

ACTIONS

1. Allocate resources towards evaluation, research and knowledge building on international projects, initiatives, and programmes we support and coordinate. This shall inform our monitoring approach as well as ensuring that our decision-making is reflective of the challenges faced by the sectors in Malta when internationalising artistic work;
2. Organise regular knowledge sharing sessions, training and mentorship, internships and job shadowing opportunities that advocate, promote and support sustainable international touring and cultural exchanges;
3. Through our funding programmes we shall continue supporting Malta-based artists in their international touring, residencies, showcasing, networking events, co-productions, collaborations and marketing;
4. Advocate for strong interministerial collaborations that specialise on international cultural relations. By leading conversations between the Ministry responsible for Culture, the Cultural Diplomacy Unit and the Malta Tourism Authority we will explore the possibility of setting up cultural attaches based in different Malta Embassies worldwide;
5. Increase our global representation through representative entities abroad such as Maltese Embassies and European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) clusters, with the aim to further engage in international cultural relations, diplomacy and exchanges, and to support Malta-based artists in showcasing their work internationally;
6. Actively participating in the newly set up EUNIC Malta Cluster along with several other EU cultural institutes and embassies to strengthen co-operation between Malta and other EUNIC members;
7. Advance and boost Malta's reputation through international marketing, public relations, and communications of Malta's most talented contemporary artists as critical components to promote their projects and activities.
8. Establish an online presence of Malta's outstanding artists and their work through a platform dedicated towards showcasing Malta-based talent to international cultural programmers, festival-makers, operators, and audiences at large.
9. Strengthen active participation as members in existing international networks such as the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA), the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) and the Salzburg Global Forum amongst others, while engaging with new international networks focusing on cultural development;
10. Organise delegations to international arts and cross-sectoral platforms including markets, expos and festivals, in collaboration with other national and international entities and networks;
11. Support the participation of the Malta pavilion in the Venice Art Biennale, London Design Biennale and other relevant biennales;
12. Support international digital collaborations, through horizontal platforms that strengthen cultural democracy transcending borders reflecting diverse voices.

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

AS ACM, WE CHAMPION THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN IMPETUS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS. WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE ARTS IS COMPLEX, MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND EMERGENT AS IT CONTINUOUSLY DEVELOPS. OUR EXPERIENCE AND EVIDENCE, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACTS, DEMONSTRATE HOW THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ARE LARGELY SHAPED BY ATTITUDES TOWARDS RISK AND INNOVATION AS WELL AS THE DIVERSITY OF BUSINESS MODELS THAT CAN RESPOND TO TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES, STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS AND OVERALL WORKING CONDITIONS.

We are thus aiming to focus primarily on creative entrepreneurship as a mindset for a more sustainable and inclusive approach towards defining and achieving success. Through investment, advocacy, communication and capacity building, our work will be focused on empowering the introduction and continuity of this mindset. The cultural and creative sectors present a highly aleatory scenario of players which have different backgrounds and ambitions that are relational to their diverse economic, social and cultural contexts. We recognise that artistic, cultural and creative practitioners have ambitions that range from engaging professionally in the sectors on a full-time basis to sustaining their practice without being their primary source of income. Therefore, we will be both mindful of these realities and supportive of the array of engagements with the sectors, while considering the distinctiveness pertaining to the different sub-sectors within the cultural and creative ecology.

Whilst respecting and supporting all levels of engagement, we remain committed to elevating the status of the artists and professionals by advocating in favour of the significant role of the arts and creativity within communities and by promoting freedom of expression and inclusion, improved working conditions and equitable access to opportunities. Therefore, all efforts enabling entrepreneurial attitude are also efforts which aim to lead to the promotion and safeguarding of the professional status, and to re-affirming the position of the cultural and creative sectors within the economy. Our aim is also for creative entrepreneurship to be an endeavour with a social remit. We will be championing social entrepreneurship to address the position of the cultural and creative sectors within the communities and society at large. This notion addresses a lacuna which the sectors have been experiencing in the past six years and combines innovation and entrepreneurship with the social remit of artistic expression. This will both enable and support the collective aspirations of art as a means to stimulate social development and wellbeing.

We will ensure therefore, that creative entrepreneurship is thoroughly embraced as a powerful and practical tool to champion and achieve our targets and commitments for the coming years.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

We aim to promote creative entrepreneurship as a mindset, fostering an empowered, resilient and collaborative artistic community.

PRIORITIES

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We consider training and development as major enablers for creative entrepreneurship in a set cultural and creative ecology. These are tools which inform practitioners about ways to monetise their ideas and/or grow their businesses further, as well as providing an exchange of knowledge on how to operate in particular contexts, in public, private and voluntary sectors. We aim to mobilise our partnerships with relevant entities - such as Malta Enterprise -- to ensure that we disseminate information about all the training and development opportunities available aimed towards facilitating the growth and scaling up of creative business ventures.

PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure has, for years, been a main source of concern for the sectors in Malta. The public consultation has further confirmed this common apprehension and highlighted the points to be addressed in this case, primarily the lack of

equipped venues (particularly in relation to certain specific art forms), the high costs, centralisation of venues and lack of accessibility in general. Therefore, this priority area carries weight, both in terms of its impact on the sustainability of the sectors as well as its impact on the professionalisation of the sectors. The input needed to address and upgrade infrastructure is significant and requires time and planning. We propose a staged and pragmatic approach for the coming years which starts by minimising the imminent hurdles currently characterising infrastructure.

We will be investing in specific programmes that seek to upgrade and repurpose existing spaces to accommodate the whole spectrum of activities within the creative and cultural sectors. We will also pursue our collaborations with relevant public entities that focus on urban planning and industry infrastructure to invest in the upgrading and refurbishing of localised community cultural spaces.. We will be actively seeking and liaising with external funding sources – such as EU funding streams – for further support.. We will also be supporting the access of artists and cultural organisations to these spaces by instilling and promoting solid practices enabling sustainability and full use of these upgraded spaces.

The pandemic has fast-tracked and intensified the general interest in digitalisation. This triggered important conversations about the digital opportunities for monetisation; the generation of revenue through such practices and the value of digital art. We want to promote the digital aspect as another important channel for expression which encourages new ways of reach, experimentation, accessibility, and income-generation.

CLUSTERING: NETWORKING AND SUPPORT

Our aim is to foster a culture of collaborative networking and support which stimulates links and meaningful connections on an intersectoral and intrasectoral level, in order to stimulate and sustain entrepreneurship whilst allowing for co-creation, skills transfer and collaborations to take place. The concept of clustering will be a main driving force behind several initiatives which include supporting dedicated physical and virtual spaces that will act as a common convergence point for individuals and entities to come together and collaborate.

We are interested in tapping into new opportunities by creating connections with new and innovative sectors. However, we will also strive to instil a solid model for cooperation and support within the sectors; particularly between public entities, private/independent entities and/or individuals operating in cultural and creative sectors. We aim to instil synergies in the cultural and creative ecology, allowing a level playing field for all stakeholders and maximising on resources available.

We are also heavily invested in promoting cross-sectoral collaborations to stimulate innovation across board and to maximise on entrepreneurship. We are committed to empowering connections that result in the creative entrepreneurship mindset being adopted within other sectors such as healthcare, environment, urban development, science and technology and social causes. with a wide variety of sectors which include health, environment, urban planning.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

An important point which emerged from the consultation process is the importance of a mind-shift in favour of sustained activity rather than one-off projects. We will therefore engage to support all practitioners to seek and explore the relevant channels for artistic work to be created, promoted and then sustained. We will seek to upgrade revenue generation channels and provide advice on maximising income potential, such as, the possible revenue generated through intellectual property. In relation to the Internationalisation Strategic Area, showcasing, international market penetration and touring will also remain a focus. This envisions the harmonisation of efforts in increasing, developing and engaging new audiences with this being a crucial element to sustain the artists' work and practice.

We will also consider the artists' recurring need to pause their revenue-generating activity to focus solely on researching and developing their artistic practice or develop a concept for a set period of time. We will be offering our support during this period of artistic research, in an effort to provide artists with the space needed to continue growing and creating, without compromising immediate financial needs.

ACTIONS

1. Create and sustain a diverse training, mentorship and development programme focusing on entrepreneurial skills, attributes and attitudes, supporting different art forms and modes of practice.
2. Engage in a process leading to improved and renewed access to existing infrastructure with a specific focus on repurposing existing spaces for use by the creative sectors. This includes proposing collaboration frameworks with already existing community spaces so that they are supported by ACM to offer substantially subsidised rates for rental of spaces.

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3. Empower networking and clustering through relevant partnerships and infrastructural investment, offering the means for clustering and networking to materialise and grow.
 4. Develop a framework for PCOs, following a discussion with stakeholders, including the private and voluntary sectors. This framework may include guidelines, resources and standards in terms of intellectual property, ethical considerations, remuneration and pricing mechanisms, recruitment practices and co-production - arrangements to empower collective bargaining.
 5. Inform and advocate about possibilities of cross-sectoral collaborations and potential areas to tackle through creative entrepreneurship. We will introduce and sustain an exchange programme, focusing on bringing together various stakeholders from a wide range of industries and facilitating collaboration between artists and cultural and creative practitioners and other sectors.
 6. Initiate a programme of artistic residencies within the wider public sector to stimulate creativity and innovation within other sectors.
 7. Advocate for and support the creation of a legal framework for the creation and operation of social enterprises within the cultural and creative sectors, which would be addressing social and cultural needs through dedicated organisational set-ups.
 8. Set up a brokerage information service for self-employed professionals in the cultural and creative sectors to advise in matters pertaining to their status as self-employed professionals.
 9. Advocate for fair contracts which acknowledge and reward adequately all levels of the creative value chain, through forms of public engagement including the publication of relevant guidelines and toolkits.
 10. Produce and manage a yearly investors' pitch event, bringing together creative entrepreneurs and businesses interested in investing and supporting the arts.
 11. Invest in research and development funds to assist creative entrepreneurs in innovating, expanding and growing their creative business practices in tandem with their artistic practices.
 12. Launch a new business incubator programme (which would include workshops, mentorship, surgery and analysis) focusing on the creation of effective business strategies and revenue-generation models for practitioners on an individual basis.
 13. Together with other public entities, engage to provide practitioners with the necessary knowledge and awareness about intellectual property rights through a regular promotional and training programme as well as a dedicated portal.
 14. Engage in partnerships with technology-focused entities - such as Tech.mt, MITA and representatives of the private sector - with the aim of developing a specific programme which aims at developing digital and technology skills.
 15. Invest in a funding support scheme which will directly assist creative entrepreneurs to explore, engage and work in the digital sphere and provide related incentives.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

RESEARCH HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF OUR OPERATIONS OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS AND SHALL CONTINUE TO SHAPE THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK IN YEARS TO COME. RESEARCH IS A PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL AREA AS IT IS, BY NATURE, NOT A SELF-CONTAINED SPHERE OF ACTIVITY, BUT ONE THAT IMPACTS AND SUPPORTS A MULTITUDE OF AREAS THAT WE WILL BE ADDRESSING THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD.

This is particularly pertinent when discussing research within the context of ACM's strategic planning. The goal of research as a strategic area is to nurture an internal culture of openness, critique, and analysis, enabling us to take informed decisions about our operations, partnerships and future development, across all areas of our work. Research supports this kind of growth in several ways.

Foremost amongst them is the role of research in identifying and highlighting existing trends or patterns of behaviour and activity within the cultural and creative sectors, as well as gaining more complex insights into the status of artists and creative practitioners. Whether this is addressing questions related to audience participation, creative activity, education, internationalisation or economic output, research enables us to develop a richer, more textured understanding of the ways in which the sector is developing, as well as the challenges that artists and creative practitioners face throughout their practice. This is especially valuable when seen within the broader context of time, whereby a more extensive and longitudinal body of data can reveal more meaningful shifts and developments.

This, in turn, enables us to position ourselves at the forefront of the sectors, as a proactive, visionary and compassionate entity that is driving positive change and leading the sectors into uncharted waters. Developing a more robust, representative, and deep body of knowledge enables us to not only support the sector in the present, but also to predict and lay the groundwork for future developments. This kind of knowledge enables ACM, and the cultural and creative sectors, to understand the human, social, and economic investment required in emerging fields of practice.

Research is also crucial in establishing new partnerships and exploring new avenues of inquiry. As creative practice and artistic engagement become increasingly interdisciplinary – both in terms of their modes of practice as well as their subject matter – it is vital for us to establish and maintain strong relationships with individuals, entities and organisations operating within a range of different fields outside the arts. Research can support this by inspiring new fields of exploration, identifying areas of collaboration and mutual interest, and bridging previously unrelated areas through knowledge transfer.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

We aim to develop a comprehensive knowledge base which will guide the sectors' future growth, to advocate for and support evidence-based policy development, and to evaluate our funding programmes, strategy, and general operations to ensure that we adhere to our core principles of cultural rights.

PRIORITIES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Continue developing a holistic understanding of the sectors by tracing the socio-economic conditions of artists, cultural and creative practitioners and organisations working across the cultural and creative sectors in Malta, as well as gathering data related to audiences of cultural activity. Aside from economic indicators, this also includes tackling topics such as diversity and representation across the arts, mapping the resources available to artists, understanding changes in the sources of funding for the arts, and predicting potential future trends in the local artistic sector.

ASSESS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Assessing the infrastructural and regulatory framework through which the sectors operate, including the mapping out the sector's administrative and regulatory setup in order to understand the obstacles that practitioners face in developing sustainable structures through which to operate, investigating Malta's physical cultural infrastructure, and identifying the sector's most pressing needs to encourage further growth.

CROSS-SECTORAL RESEARCH

Developing greater knowledge about the cross-sectoral connections of the arts, by investigating the relationship between artistic practice and various other aspects of social life, including wellbeing, urban development, sustainability, and civic engagement, amongst others.

PROFESSIONALISATION

Contributing to knowledge about the ongoing professionalisation of the cultural and creative sectors in Malta, particularly by identifying and addressing issues about which relatively little local data is available so far, including digital literacy in the arts, arts education, and internationalisation, amongst others.

EVALUATING FUNDING PROGRAMMES

Strengthen the impact of our general operations and funding programmes through evaluation studies aimed at understanding their real-world impacts and the manner in which public funding can evolve to better address the sectors needs.

ARTISTIC LEGACY

Exploring and documenting Malta's artistic legacy in a more comprehensive manner. This includes supporting and promoting research into the development of the arts in Malta over the past decades, as well as establishing more formal documentation and record-keeping related to the work carried out by ACM since its inception.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Developing more open, transparent, and engaging forms of communicating research outcomes in order to maximise the reach and impact of research findings.

ACTIONS

1. Carry out an update to the Cultural Participation Survey to gain more insight into the latest trends on cultural participation at a national level and enable comparative analysis.
2. Create a consultative working group composed of key stakeholders from the public, private and non-governmental sectors to discuss ongoing and future research in the cultural and creative sectors.
3. Carry out a mapping exercise into the physical, legislative and regulatory infrastructure of the different cultural and creative sectors in order to develop a more holistic understanding of the environment within which cultural and creative practitioners operate.
4. Develop an interactive online interface for quantitative data in order for research findings to be presented and shared in an open and engaging manner.
5. Carry out evaluation studies into our funding programmes to assess their impact and success so as to make recommendations for their improvement to address sectoral needs.
6. Create more comprehensive and transparent structures for the collection of data related to ACM's funding to develop a better understanding of the impact, reach, and diversity of ACM's funding programmes.
7. Carry out qualitative and quantitative studies into the relationship between artistic practice and other aspects of social life, including wellbeing and civic engagement, thereby gaining more insight into the cross-sectoral connections between the arts and other socio-economic areas.
8. Develop a database of cultural and creative practitioners to be used for the purpose of improved quantitative data collection.
9. Develop strategic collaborations with entities and organisations working across the sectors to support further research.



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