

Moving Perspectives

Symposium reflection



Photo: Zuhail Kocan



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Caring but brave, reflective but resolute, artistic but institutionalized

The symposium, *Moving Perspectives*, held in Copenhagen on 19–20 May 2026, marked the conclusion of the three-year Creative Europe project *Moving Identities*. Around 80 artists, curators, producers, decision-makers and others from the performing arts scene gathered to share experiences and explore future directions for a more inclusive and sustainable performing arts sector.

Moving Identities was established to support and promote underrepresented performing arts groups through international residencies, mentoring and trans-European collaboration. By exploring questions of diversity, inclusion and contemporary European identities, the project sought to strengthen both artistic development and institutional learning across the European performing arts sector.

The symposium was a key part of the project's final dissemination activities and served as a valuable space for reflection on experiences and insights from the project and how they can be applied.

Over the course of the two days, we saw how these ambitions unfolded not as fixed strategies, but as ongoing negotiations between different needs, positions and perspectives. What emerged was a shared recognition that the field is already deeply reflective, but searching – and at times even struggling – to translate intentions into clear and concrete action.

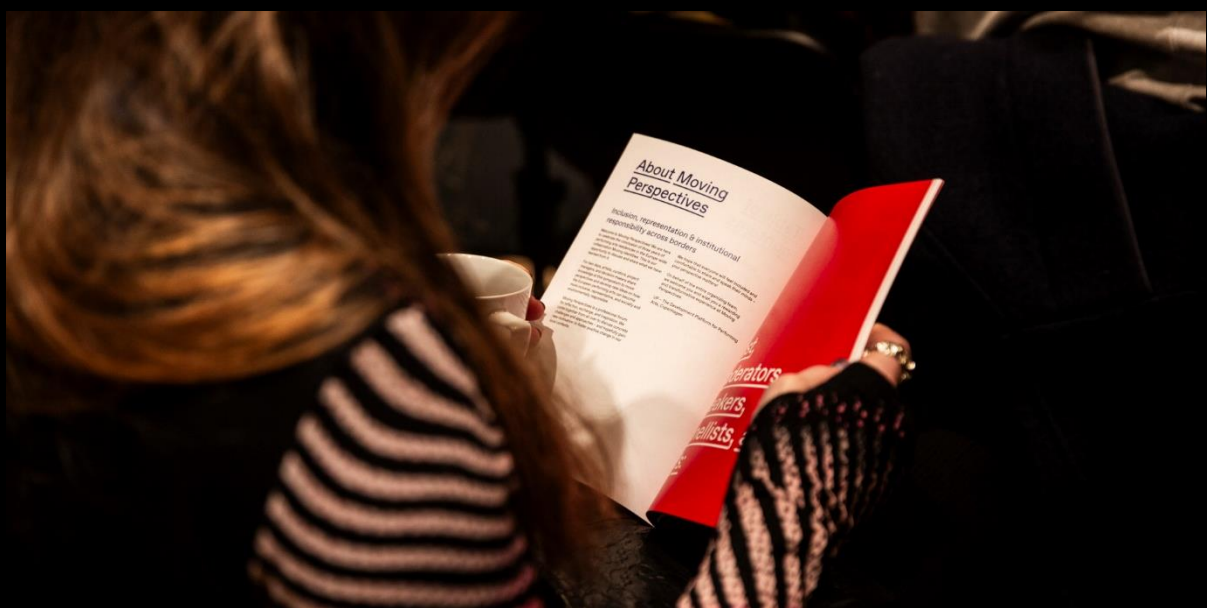


Photo: Zuhail Kocan

The paradoxes of the change we need

The symposium revealed a central contradiction: institutions are increasingly aware of the need for change when it comes to diversity, inclusion and representation, yet struggle to translate awareness into action. Between care and courage, reflection and action, this persistent inertia becomes a barrier for change in itself. These tensions define not only the challenges facing the sector today, but also the conditions for improvement.

Why a symposium?

The symposium originated in ancient Greece as a social gathering for shared reflection, dialogue, and the exchange of ideas. It contrasts the one-way communication seminars and conferences often use and is based on exchanging and engaging in knowledge rather than simply receiving it.

The programme, as shown on the last pages, brought this format into practice through a mix of reflections, conversations, provocations, artistic testimonies and co-creation labs, underlining the collaborative and explorative nature of the project.

The format and choice of keynotes proved particularly well suited for the discussions and reflections the project called for, creating a safe - and often brave - space that enabled open, vulnerable, and meaningful conversations.

Artistic practice and institutional change

Throughout the symposium, discussions returned to the relationship between artistic development and institutional transformation and their interdependency when we strive to make changes.

We learnt how institutions are increasingly aware of the need for change yet often remain structured and rigid in ways that make transformation slow and difficult. The ambition to be *caring*, *inclusive*, and *open to change* coexists with procedures, expectations, reporting, economic conditions and habits that are harder to shift.

This revealed a central paradox: the more reflective institutions become, the more visible the gap becomes between intention and implementation.

Challenging power and representation

Keynotes and panel discussions repeatedly returned to questions of European identity, representation, and power.

“Everything is moving – except power.”
– Keynote speaker

Throughout the conversations, it became clear that mobility, exchange, and diversity have expanded across the sector, while decision-making structures and the distribution of resources remain less affected. The ability to name these dynamics is well developed; acting on them remains more complex.

The conversations repeatedly returned to the tension between recognizing inequality and redistributing power in practice.



The symposium opened with the performance Mourning in the Wrong Language by Gomrâh, exploring themes of language, belonging, and identity. The group participated in the Moving Identities residency programme in 2025-2026. Photo: Zuhâl Kocan.

Institutional inertia

Part of the answer to the questions posed, may lie in understanding the role institutions play in enabling – and often prohibiting - change.

Without placing the full responsibility for either the problem or its solution on institutions alone, several speakers returned to the question of why structural change so often moves slowly on an institutional level. A form of institutional inertia became apparent throughout the discussions.

This dynamic was captured in a visual intervention, where “the institution” was framed as a living entity:

*“The institution feels old,
the institution needs care,
the institution feels overwhelmed,
the institution needs therapy,
the institution feels vulnerable,
the institution is alone,
the institution wants a MAKEOVER!”*

This framing resonated strongly with many participants and became a recurring topic of conversation during breaks, meals, and informal exchanges throughout the symposium.

Institutions revealed themselves not only as structures of power, but as fragile systems that are dependent on the people who maintain them, shaped by history, and often unsure how to transform themselves, let alone how to navigate in increasingly complex times.

Institutions are not merely buildings or organizations, but complex entities consisting of networks of expectations, habits, shared assumptions, and external structures. Some are visible and formalized; others remain implicit and difficult to challenge.

This made it clear that change requires more than new policies. It calls for shifts in behavior, communication, and everyday practice. Institutions revealed themselves as both enabling and limiting forces - as spaces that support artistic work, while at the same time shaping and at times restricting its possibilities.

From safe spaces to brave spaces

The notion of a “safe space” was repeatedly highlighted as essential for the kinds of conversations the sector needs to have. During the symposium, however, participants also challenged the idea that safety alone is sufficient. Instead, a call emerged for *brave spaces*. Spaces where underrepresented voices can share experiences, perspectives, and concerns openly, even when these conversations may be uncomfortable for others to hear.

Brave spaces allow for disagreement, uncertainty, and confrontation while maintaining care, respect, and responsibility within the group. Rather than removing tension, they acknowledge it and create conditions for working through it constructively.

In this sense, care and bravery were not opposites, but interdependent conditions for change.



Photo: Zuhail Kocan

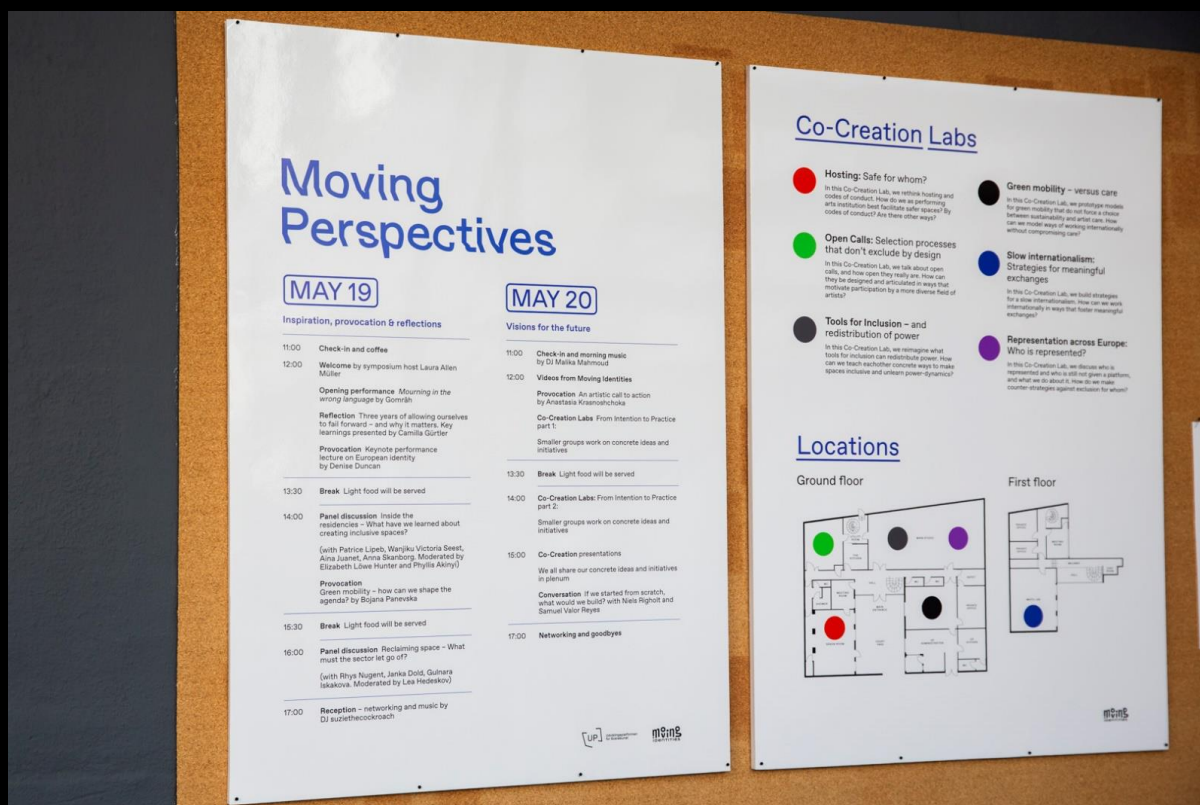


Photo: Zuhal Kocan

Co-Creation Labs – from reflection to action

The second day of the symposium was dedicated to co-creation labs. If the first day had focused on identifying tensions, paradoxes, and challenges, the labs provided an opportunity to work within them. Participants gathered in smaller groups to explore how questions of care, inclusion, representation, sustainability, and institutional change might be translated into concrete practices and future action.

Rather than producing finished solutions, the labs generated new perspectives, practical proposals, and shared reflections. Together, they revealed both the complexity of the challenges facing the sector and the willingness of participants to move from reflection towards experimentation and change.

In the following we have summarized the main findings from the labs:

1. Hosting – Safe for whom?

How do we understand “safety” in residencies, and who gets to define it? This lab explored hosting as a relational and context-dependent practice.

Lab-findings

- Hosting begins with clear communication about expectations, needs, capacities, and limitations.
- Care riders can be useful tools for articulating dreams, wants, needs, and non-negotiables.
- Power dynamics between artists and institutions influence what artists feel able to ask for and negotiate.
- Hosting is a form of care work that also requires institutional support for hosts and staff.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach; meaningful hosting depends on context, relationships, and genuine interest in the people being hosted.

2. Open Calls – Selection processes that don't exclude by design

What makes an open call truly accessible? This lab examined how standardized formats can unintentionally exclude.

Lab-findings

- While open calls are widely perceived as a fair mechanism for access, they often place significant administrative burdens on both artists and institutions.
- Artists called for greater transparency regarding selection criteria, decision-making processes, and curatorial expectations, allowing applicants to better assess whether a call is relevant to them.
- Participants highlighted the substantial amount of unpaid labor involved in preparing applications and pointed to a need for acknowledging and supporting this work.
- Institutions expressed a need for more targeted approaches that reduce application volumes while maintaining fairness and accessibility.
- The discussion ultimately raised broader questions about whether open calls alone are capable of ensuring equal access, or whether alternative and complementary approaches are needed.

3. Tools for inclusion – and redistribution of power

What happens when inclusion remains a tool instead of a structural shift? This lab focused on linking inclusion to power redistribution.

Lab-findings

- Participants questioned the concept of inclusion itself, arguing that it is often defined by those who hold power and therefore risks reinforcing existing structures rather than challenging them.
- A shift from inclusion to belonging was proposed, focusing on creating environments where people feel genuinely welcome rather than formally included.
- The discussion highlighted several key tensions, including inclusion versus belonging, safety versus artistic freedom, structure versus autonomy, and access versus power.
- Transparency, trust, and awareness of power dynamics were identified as essential conditions for meaningful participation.
- Bias awareness, bias training, and structured bias-blocking practices can help institutions identify hidden barriers and create more equitable access to opportunities and decision-making.

4. Green mobility vs. care

How can sustainability be balanced with care for artists? This lab explored tensions between environmental goals and working conditions.

Lab-findings

- Green mobility cannot be separated from care; sustainable mobility depends on accessibility, support and flexibility.
- Responsibility for sustainable mobility should be shared between artists, institutions and funders.
- Care budgets can help accommodate diverse needs such as accessibility services, childcare and additional support requirements.
- Greater transparency about accessibility conditions and available support can improve participation and planning.
- Care and accessibility riders can help articulate needs and expectations in advance.
- Sustainability should be understood broadly, including local ecosystems, community engagement and responsible resource use, not only transportation choices.

5. Slow internationalism

What does meaningful international collaboration require? This lab explored time as a necessary condition for exchange.

Lab-findings

- Meaningful international collaboration depends on trust, continuity, and long-term relationship building rather than mobility and speed alone.
- Physical encounters remain central to international exchange, while online communication plays an important role in maintaining and nurturing connections over time.
- Participants questioned whether "slow internationalism" should be understood as an ideal in itself, noting that many artists depend on fast-moving international networks in order to sustain their practice.
- The discussion highlighted a need to value artistic processes as highly as artistic outputs, challenging dominant ideas of success and productivity within the sector.
- Sustainable international mobility raises important questions about resources and responsibility, including who covers the additional costs associated with slower and greener forms of travel.
- Clear communication and mutual understanding between artists and institutions were identified as essential conditions for successful international collaboration.

6. Representation across Europe

What does representation mean beyond visibility? This lab examined structural barriers to access and influence.

Lab-findings

- Representation is about access, influence and participation, not only visibility.
- Inclusion requires questioning the structures, institutions and narratives people are invited into.
- Europe is experienced differently across contexts, highlighting the need for multiple perspectives and understandings of belonging.
- Institutions have a responsibility to support a greater plurality of stories, voices and artistic perspectives.
- Moving beyond stereotypes and tokenism requires structural change rather than symbolic representation alone.
- Representation should be reflected not only on stage, but also in decision-making, programming and audience development.

Concrete Outcomes and Shared Learning

Across the six labs, different themes and perspectives repeatedly converged around a number of shared concerns. Trust emerged as a prerequisite for meaningful collaboration, while transparency, communication, and relationship-building were identified as essential conditions for participation and exchange.

Several discussions challenged systems based on standardization, gatekeeping, and control, instead pointing towards approaches grounded in care, flexibility, and shared responsibility. Whether discussing hosting, inclusion, mobility, representation, or international collaboration, participants repeatedly returned to a need for structures that are able to accommodate diversity without reproducing barriers.

One of the simplest statements shared during the symposium captured many of these discussions: *“Ask, trust, pay the artist.”*

Rather than presenting finished solutions, the labs opened pathways for further exploration and action. The findings and reflections will feed into the final Moving Identities report and continue to inform future work across the consortium and beyond.

Impact and Community

Beyond the formal programme, the symposium demonstrated the value of gathering artists, organizations, and cultural workers in the same physical space.

Throughout the two days, relationships built over the course of the project became visible in conversations, exchanges, and new connections across artistic, organizational, and geographic boundaries. The symposium highlighted that meaningful collaboration depends not only on programmes and structures, but also on trust, familiarity, and the time required to build professional relationships.

In this sense, the symposium was not only a reflection on the outcomes of Moving Identities, but also an example of one of its central learnings: that sustainable international collaboration is built through ongoing encounters between people.



Photo: Zuhal Kocan

Conclusion – Holding the Paradoxes

The symposium did not resolve the tensions it revealed. Instead, it made them visible as conditions for change.

Across keynotes, conversations and co-creation labs, participants repeatedly returned to the importance of trust, care, communication, and shared responsibility. While the themes varied, many of the discussions pointed towards the same challenge: creating structures and policies that accommodate differences without reproducing barriers.

The performing arts scene – and perhaps the arts sector in general - appears increasingly capable of reflection and intent to change but is still challenged when it comes to taking the step from reflection to action. The question that remains is therefore not whether change is necessary, but how institutions, artists, and decision-makers can move from awareness to implementation.

To move forward may not require eliminating these paradoxes but figuring out how to coexist with them and use them as artistic and transformative powers in themselves. Being caring, yet brave; reflective, yet active; artistic, yet capable of reshaping the structures it inhabits.

The symposium programme

Day 1 - Inspiration, provocations & reflection

Welcome by symposium host **Laura Allen Müller**

Opening Performance: *Mourning in The Wrong Language* by **Gomrâh**

Reflection: Three years of allowing ourselves to fail forward, presented by **Camilla Gürtler**.

Provocation: Keynote Performance Lecture on European Identity by **Denise Duncan**

Panel discussion: *Inside the Moving Identities residencies – What have we learned about creating inclusive spaces?*

(with **Patrice Lipeb**, **Wanjiku Victoria Seest**, **Aina Juanet**, **Anna Skanborg**.
Moderated by **Elizabeth Löwe Hunter** and **Phyllis Akinyi**)

Provocation: *Green mobility – how can we shape the agenda?* by **Bojana Panevska**

Panel discussion: *Reclaiming space – What must the sector let go of?*

(with Rhys Nugent, Janka Dold, Gulnara Iskakova. Moderated by Lea Hedekov)

Reception, networking, and music by DJ suziethcockroach

Day 2 – Visions for the future

Coffee and morning music by DJ Malika Mahmoud

Artistic Intervention: Videos from *Moving Identities*

Provocation: *An artistic call to action* by Anastasia Krasnoshchoka

Co-Creation Labs: *From Intention to Practice – part 1*

Co-Creation Lab Presentations: Sharing ideas and initiatives in plenum

Conversation: *If we started from scratch, what would we build?*
(with Niels Righolt and Samuel Valor Reyes)

Attendance list (organisations represented)

Abjectified Project	ISKRA Production
Anart / Teater A	ITI Germany
Artefactourism	Jennifer for a Day
Aurora Nova	JuSTart
Bikubenfonden	Karmaklubb*
Blaagaard Teater	Kunstplaats Vonk
Bæredygtigt Kulturliv NU	La Peche
CKI – The Danish Centre for Arts and Interculture	LIMINAL LAB
Creative Europe Desk Denmark	lím collective
Culture Action Europe	Nau Ivanow
Danish Cultural Institute	On the Move
Davvi – Centre for Performing Arts	Out of Balanz
DutchCulture TransArtists	President, German Association for Asian Art
Ensemble I Transiti	SEAT
Foundation INITIUM	Söltumatu Tantsu Lava (STL)
Gazart	The Age of Love
Gathonii//Wanjiku	Theatre of the Women of the Camp
Giraff Graff	Third Figure
Gomrâh	Toaster
HAUT	Udviklingsplatformen for Scenekunst / The Development Platform for Performing Arts
HELLERAU	and a range of independent artists, producers, researchers and cultural practitioners from across Europe.
HimHerAndIt	
In Futurum	

Note on attribution

This reflection is guided by the spirit of the Chatham House Rule. While keynotes, performances, and publicly presented contributions are attributed, reflections, discussions, and insights from participants are presented collectively. The intention is to share knowledge and learning while preserving a space for open and honest dialogue.



The symposium also featured an exhibition with presentations from all participating partners and artists as well as props from some of the performances. Photo: Zuhal Kocan

View a gallery of photos from the symposium here:

[Photo gallery from Moving Perspectives](#)

Video shown at the Symposium

The second day opened with a short film presenting experiences and reflections from the Moving Identities residency programme, providing a common point of departure for the lab discussions.

See the video here:

<https://www.movingidentities.eu/symposium-2026-moving-perspectives>

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About Moving Identities

Moving Identities is a Creative Europe-funded European residency programme supporting underrepresented performing arts groups through international residencies, mentoring, artistic exchange and cross-border collaboration. The programme explores diversity, inclusion and contemporary European identities while strengthening international networks within the performing arts sector.

Learn more:

www.movingidentities.eu

Follow the project:

Instagram: @movingidentitieseurope

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