From Encounters to Structural Change

Policy Report on Inclusion, Diversity and Institutional Responsibility in Moving Identities, 2023–2026



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Introduction

Introduction

Moving Identities was conceived as a transnational residency programme exploring diversity, inclusion and contemporary European identity through artistic exchange. Between 2023 and 2026, it brought together artists, performing arts venues and cultural organisations across Europe, combining artistic development with institutional reflection. Its ambition was twofold: to increase the visibility and opportunities of underrepresented artists, and to encourage participating organisations to reconsider how they select, support, host and develop opportunities for artists.

The project's three-year trajectory reveals both the value and the difficulty of this approach. The annual reflections and internal evaluations document a gradual development in the partnership's understanding of inclusion. The first year concentrated on establishing the programme and discovering what its ambitions required in practice. The second year placed greater emphasis on care, accessibility, safer spaces and the relationships underpinning international collaboration. By the third year, hosting and care had become defining features of the model, supported by stronger coordination and more mature relationships between the partners.

Yet the annual evaluations also reveal a persistent tension. Organisations can become more attentive to artists' needs without necessarily changing the institutional structures that determine whether those needs can be met. Funding arrangements, buildings, transport infrastructure, professional accreditation, administrative systems and limited staff capacity continue to shape and frame who can participate and on what terms.



The final interviews carried out with the partners between May and September 2026 deepen this picture. They suggest that the project's most important contribution may not be a universally applicable model of inclusion and diversity, but rather a better understanding of the questions institutions must ask themselves. Who feels welcome? Who has influence? Whose needs are anticipated and whose needs are treated as exceptions? And how can learning from individual encounters become part of an organisation's everyday practice? Turned into policy?

Moving Identities demonstrates that inclusion is neither a single policy nor a completed institutional achievement. It is an ongoing process of examining established practices, recognising their consequences and accepting responsibility for change.

From Experimentation to Consolidation

Three Years of Learning

The first year established the importance of learning through practice. The project brought organisations into direct contact with artists whose circumstances challenged established assumptions about accessibility, hosting and artistic development. Partners learned that even small adjustments could significantly improve an artist's experience, while also discovering that their budgets, facilities and project structures often limited their ability to respond.

The first internal evaluation identified flexibility, accessibility, workload and sustainable travel as key areas requiring improvement. It also highlighted the value of personalised mentoring, local host artists and open communication between project partners. The central challenge was how to accommodate individual needs within a relatively fixed European project framework.

The second year built on these findings. Partners improved pre-residency communication, used welcome materials and checklists, shared responsibilities more actively and placed greater emphasis on safer working environments. External mediation and the development of a code of conduct formed part of a more explicit approach to inclusion. Sustainability also became a broader concern, extending beyond travel to mental health, care and the long-term viability of working practices.

However, the second-year evaluation made clear that progress was uneven. Artists continued to experience differences between venues, while some reported limited access to safe contacts or uncertainty about mentoring opportunities. The partnership also recognised the risk that reporting and administrative requirements could overshadow artistic exchange and reflection.

By the third year, the internal evaluation described a mature partnership characterised



by trust, transparency, shared ownership and more efficient coordination. Hosting had developed from a logistical responsibility into a central artistic and relational practice. Local host artists and stronger connections to the surrounding artistic communities contributed to the quality of residencies, while care helped create conditions in which artists could work with greater confidence and independence.

This progression is significant, but it should not be mistaken for the resolution of every structural problem. The final evaluation continued to identify difficulties in reconciling sustainable travel with time, care and budget constraints. Differences in infrastructure and organisational capacity remained, as did the need for clearer communication about what artists could realistically expect from the individual venues.

The project's three-year experience therefore offers a useful distinction between *developing better practices within a project and securing lasting change within institutions.* Moving Identities made substantial progress in the former and created opportunities for the latter. Whether the learning becomes permanent will depend on how it is carried into organisational strategies, budgets, staffing and decision-making after the project ends.

Between Hospitality and Professional Practice

One of the strongest conclusions emerging from the project is that hosting should be understood as a professional practice in its own right. A residency involves much more than providing a studio, accommodation and a timetable. It requires attention to the artistic process, local context, relationships, practical needs and the conditions under which artists feel able to work.

The annual reflections show how seemingly minor details can influence whether an artist feels welcome. Clear information about facilities, thoughtful introductions to local networks and the presence of someone who understands the artist's working process can make a substantial difference. Conversely, an absence of communication or a mismatch between expectations and actual conditions can undermine an otherwise well-intentioned residency.

The experience of Nau Ivanow provides a concrete illustration. In response to the needs of the Caravana de Centàurides group, the organisation installed a ramp giving access to its terrace and acquired equipment for the toilets. It also adapted accommodation arrangements through another facility available within the local network. These changes did not remain confined to the immediate residency: the practical adjustments created possibilities for future artists as well.

This is an important distinction between temporary accommodation and institutional learning. A specific artist's needs can reveal a general weakness in an organisation's infrastructure. When the response is retained and incorporated into future practice, an individual encounter becomes a lasting improvement.

The project also demonstrated the limits of goodwill. The annual evaluations describe staff investing considerable time and emotional energy in trying to provide meaningful support. Yet the experience of hosting was not



Photo: Zuhal Kocan

consistent across all venues. Differences in staffing, facilities, local networks and available resources affected what organisations could offer.

The lesson is not that every venue must provide identical conditions. Such a requirement would disregard the different realities of organisations across Europe. Rather, partners need to communicate clearly, establish shared principles and make reasonable efforts to ensure that differences in capacity do not become avoidable inequalities in treatment.

Care must also be distinguished from unlimited availability. Supporting artists does not mean that project managers should be expected to solve every problem through personal effort. Care requires boundaries, clarity and resources. Without these, an approach intended to improve working conditions can produce exhaustion among the people responsible for delivering it.

For institutions seeking to develop inclusive practice, hosting should therefore be recognised as skilled work that deserves time, training, organisational support and appropriate funding.

> Inclusion requires listening to people with lived experience. We really need them to be here around the table to discuss anything that we are thinking about, adopting.

– Residency partner

Beyond the Open Door

On Accessibility and Belonging

Moving Identities repeatedly encountered the gap between the intention to include artists and the practical conditions required for doing exactly that and for participation at large. The experiences of i.e. Caravana de Centàurides were particularly revealing. Application procedures and residency arrangements that initially appeared inclusive proved inadequate when confronted with the specific needs of disabled artists.

The Latvian partners reflected on how selection categories can create restrictive boxes, making it easier for institutions to administer a programme while limiting the range of people who can participate. This illustrates a wider problem: *procedures designed for convenience may reproduce exclusion even when the people designing them have inclusive intentions*.

Physical accessibility presented another challenge. Ramps, toilets, accommodation, equipment and transport all influenced whether participation was possible. In many cases, venues occupied buildings owned or controlled by municipalities, landlords or other external bodies. This limited their ability to undertake major structural changes. The annual reflections also stressed that accessibility extends beyond mobility to include neurodiversity, mental health and family or caring responsibilities.

The Nau Ivanow experience demonstrates what can be achieved through practical adaptation, while the challenges described by DAVVI in northern Norway highlight the influence of geography, infrastructure and local resources. DAVVI also reflected on the difficulty of improving representation within an organisation whose staff and local environment are relatively homogeneous. Its discussions raised questions about how to support underrepresented artists, including Sami and Kven artists and disabled artists,



while working meaningfully within the local context.

These examples caution against treating accessibility as a checklist that can be completed once. A venue may be physically accessible while its communication, working culture or decision-making processes remain difficult to navigate. Similarly, an artist may be admitted to a residency without feeling recognised, safe or able to influence the conditions of their participation.

This is where the distinction between access and belonging becomes important. Access enables entry; belonging concerns the quality of participation once a person is present. It involves being listened to, respected and able to contribute without having to justify one's existence or repeatedly negotiate basic conditions.

Institutions should therefore ask not only whether artists can enter their spaces, but also whether their procedures, relationships and working environments enable them to participate on meaningful terms.

> Good intentions cannot overcome inflexible funding. Even though the intention was to work with everybody, that's not going to work if the budget is limited or restricted.

– Advisory partner

Recognition, Resources and Professional Sustainability

Addressing Structural Inequality

The interviews with ITI, CKI, HimHerandIt and the Danish Cultural Institute connected the project's practical experiences to wider structural barriers within the European performing arts sector.

One concern was the difficulty faced by internationally trained artists in having their qualifications recognised within national professional systems. Differences between educational institutions and accreditation requirements can obstruct access to employment, even when artists possess substantial professional experience. The problem cannot be solved solely by inviting more diverse artists into residencies. It requires attention to the systems that determine who is recognised as a professional and who can sustain a career.

The discussions also highlighted the difficulty of navigating funding rules, legal frameworks and administrative procedures. Artists may be highly skilled in their artistic disciplines but lack access to the professional knowledge and networks needed to secure opportunities. Mentoring can help, but a single meeting is unlikely to provide the sustained guidance required to navigate complex systems.

This raises a question of responsibility. Cultural institutions often possess information, contacts and administrative expertise that independent artists need. If access to this knowledge depends on already belonging to established professional networks, inequalities are likely to persist.

The Latvian partners highlighted another structural issue: differences in costs between countries. Accommodation, travel and other expenses vary considerably across the European partnership. These differences affect the practical distribution of opportunities and can place disproportionate pressure on organisations operating with more limited resources.



The interviews also raised concerns about the concentration of public funding within established institutions rather than its direct accessibility to artists. Although the Moving Identities experiences do not provide a comprehensive analysis of European cultural expenditure, they do identify a legitimate policy question: how can funding systems support not only institutions that deliver programmes, but also the artists whose work and development those programmes are intended to advance?

The proposal for a shared European or regional platform for artist opportunities emerged from these discussions. Such a platform could make information more accessible and reduce repetitive administrative work. It would need to be developed with artists, however, and should not become another complicated system that favours those already equipped to navigate institutional procedures.

The wider lesson is that inclusion requires attention to the distribution of resources, information and professional recognition. Opening a programme to more artists is important, but it cannot substitute for addressing the conditions that determine whether they can continue working afterwards.

What has progress looked like?

Road to Organisational Change

The interviews and previous reporting does not support a reliable ranking of individual partner organisations according to their overall progress. Their roles, resources and starting points differ and the interviews did not provide a common and shared set of indicators to measure institutional change. Nevertheless, several forms of progress can be identified.

Nau Ivanow provides a clear example of practical changes with a lasting effect. Accessibility adjustments made in response to i.e. Caravana de Centàurides created improvements that could benefit future residents. Its work connecting artistic research on ecological sustainability with its own facilities also suggests how learning from the project can influence broader organisational reflection and policy work.

DAVVI's contribution highlights the importance of recognising the limits of project-based learning. They described how difficult it could be to ensure that insights gained through their work on Moving Identities reached the wider organisation. The interview also pointed towards possible changes in decision-making, including involving external perspectives in open-call and residency selection panels. This is a valuable reminder that institutional change requires more than individual commitment: it needs mechanisms for sharing knowledge and distributing responsibility.

The Latvian partners contributed a critical perspective on residency design, selection categories, international cost differences and the duration of engagement. Their interest in developing a possible second phase of the project reflected a concern that short-term residencies can create valuable artistic encounters without necessarily providing sufficient support for subsequent development.

The Danish and German policy interviews placed particular emphasis on care riders,



professional recognition, mentoring, safer spaces and access to opportunities. They also raised concerns about tokenism and the limited representation of underrepresented groups within administrative and decision-making structures.

Across these examples, progress appears in different forms: practical adaptations, improved communication, stronger relationships, more critical selection processes and a willingness to question established procedures. None should be treated as sufficient in isolation.

The most useful measure of progress is whether learning changes the way an organisation operates. Does it affect budgets and responsibilities? Does it alter how opportunities are advertised and artists selected? Does it give underrepresented artists greater influence? Does it improve conditions beyond the duration of a single project?

These questions shift evaluation away from visibility alone and towards the institutional conditions that make participation possible.

> A change can benefit artists beyond the original project. Caravana and other groups related to them came after Moving Identities to use our rehearsal spaces, because they knew that it was a more friendly space for them to work in.

– Residency partner

EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

Eight Recommendations for Institutions

Based on the partner interviews and the annual evaluations the experience of Moving Identities suggests eight priorities for cultural organisations seeking to embed inclusion, diversity and representation in their work and potentially turn them into long-term policies.

1. Treat hosting as a professional practice

Define the responsibilities of hosts, provide appropriate preparation and recognise the time required to support the visiting artists and artistic development. Combine shared principles with approaches adapted to each artist and local context.

2. Build care into organisational structures

Use care riders or equivalent agreements to clarify individual needs, working conditions and expectations. Embed care in planning, staffing, budgets and timelines rather than relying on individual goodwill.

3. Design for belonging, not simply access

Examine the whole experience of participation, from application and selection to accommodation, working relationships and follow-up. Provide safe contacts and clear procedures for raising concerns.

4. Make accessibility a structural responsibility

Assess physical spaces, equipment, communication and working arrangements before programmes begin. Involve artists in identifying requirements and allocate flexible resources to address needs that cannot be predicted in advance.

5. Invest in time and sustainable working conditions

Recognise that artistic development and organisational learning require time. Provide realistic schedules, appropriate travel and rest arrangements and support for mental health and caring responsibilities. Avoid making artists or project staff absorb the hidden costs of inclusion.

6. Share knowledge and opportunities beyond established networks

Make information about residencies, funding and professional development more accessible. Explore shared platforms where they respond to demonstrated needs and ensure that artists have a meaningful role in their design and governance.

7. Redistribute responsibility and decision-making power

Include external perspectives in selection panels and advisory structures. Create meaningful opportunities for underrepresented artists to influence institutional policies and ensure that project learning is shared across teams rather than remaining with individual coordinators.

8. Evaluate lasting change, not only project delivery

Assess changes in policies, budgets, accessibility, selection procedures and working relationships. Document failures as well as successes, and create follow-up processes that allow learning to inform future organisational practice.



Photo: Zuhal Kocan

Three priorities for future European cultural policy

Moving Identities also offers three considerations for the European Union and its cultural programmes.

Make flexibility and accessibility integral to funding. Grant agreements should allow organisations to respond to emerging access needs and changing circumstances. Budgets should recognise care, accessibility, preparation and rest as essential costs, while taking account of differences in national infrastructure and living costs.

Support continuity and institutional learning beyond individual projects. Funding should create opportunities to sustain relationships, develop promising artistic work and embed organisational changes. Evaluation should consider not only activities and immediate outputs, but also whether projects improve working conditions and distribute opportunities and influence more fairly.

Address the structural conditions of artists' professional lives. European cooperation should help reduce unnecessary administrative barriers, improve access to professional knowledge and opportunities and support dialogue about the recognition of international qualifications. Shared platforms may contribute, provided that they are accessible, artist-led and proportionate to the needs they address.

These three priorities follow from the project's experience rather than from a comprehensive assessment of the different European cultural programmes. They nevertheless point towards a central policy question: how can funding arrangements support *the structural changes* that inclusive cultural cooperation requires, rather than simply financing temporary opportunities within unchanged systems?

Learning that lasts

Learning that lasts

Moving Identities has demonstrated the value of bringing artists and institutions together in a setting where assumptions can be challenged through practice. Over three years, the partnership developed stronger relationships, more considered approaches to hosting, greater attention to accessibility and a clearer understanding of the conditions required for meaningful artistic exchange.

Its experience also reveals the limits of project-based change. Good intentions cannot, on their own, overcome inaccessible buildings, inadequate budgets, complex administrative systems or unequal access to professional networks. Nor can individual project coordinators be expected to transform institutions without support from colleagues, leadership and funders.

The project's policy legacy should therefore be understood as both practical and critical. It has developed methods that can inform future residencies, while exposing questions that extend beyond the partnership itself: who is recognised as an artist, who has access to opportunities and who bears the cost when systems fail to accommodate different needs?

The next challenge is to ensure that these insights survive beyond the funded programme. That means embedding care in organisational structures, treating hosting as skilled work, improving access to knowledge and resources and creating opportunities for underrepresented artists to influence the institutions that shape their professional lives.

Inclusion is not a final state that an organisation can declare itself to have achieved. It is a continuing responsibility to examine how people participate, how decisions are made and how resources are distributed. That needs to be reflected in future policy



design. Moving Identities offers a compelling argument for approaching this responsibility through sustained relationships, honest reflection and practical change.

The lasting value of the project will ultimately be measured not only by the encounters it enabled, but by the extent to which those encounters change what institutions do next. Turning the learnings of Moving Identities into modes of operating structurally.

About this report

This policy report reflects the learnings, insights and experiences from the project Moving Identities. Based on the three annual evaluations and interviews with all partners the report aims to identify some of the long-term learnings and perspectives from the project from a policy point of view, addressing dilemmas, challenges and recommendations for both hosting institutions and the European Union's supporting funding programmes.

For further information of project activities, the partners, the participating artists, annual reports and additional resources, please visit www.movingidentities.eu

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.

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