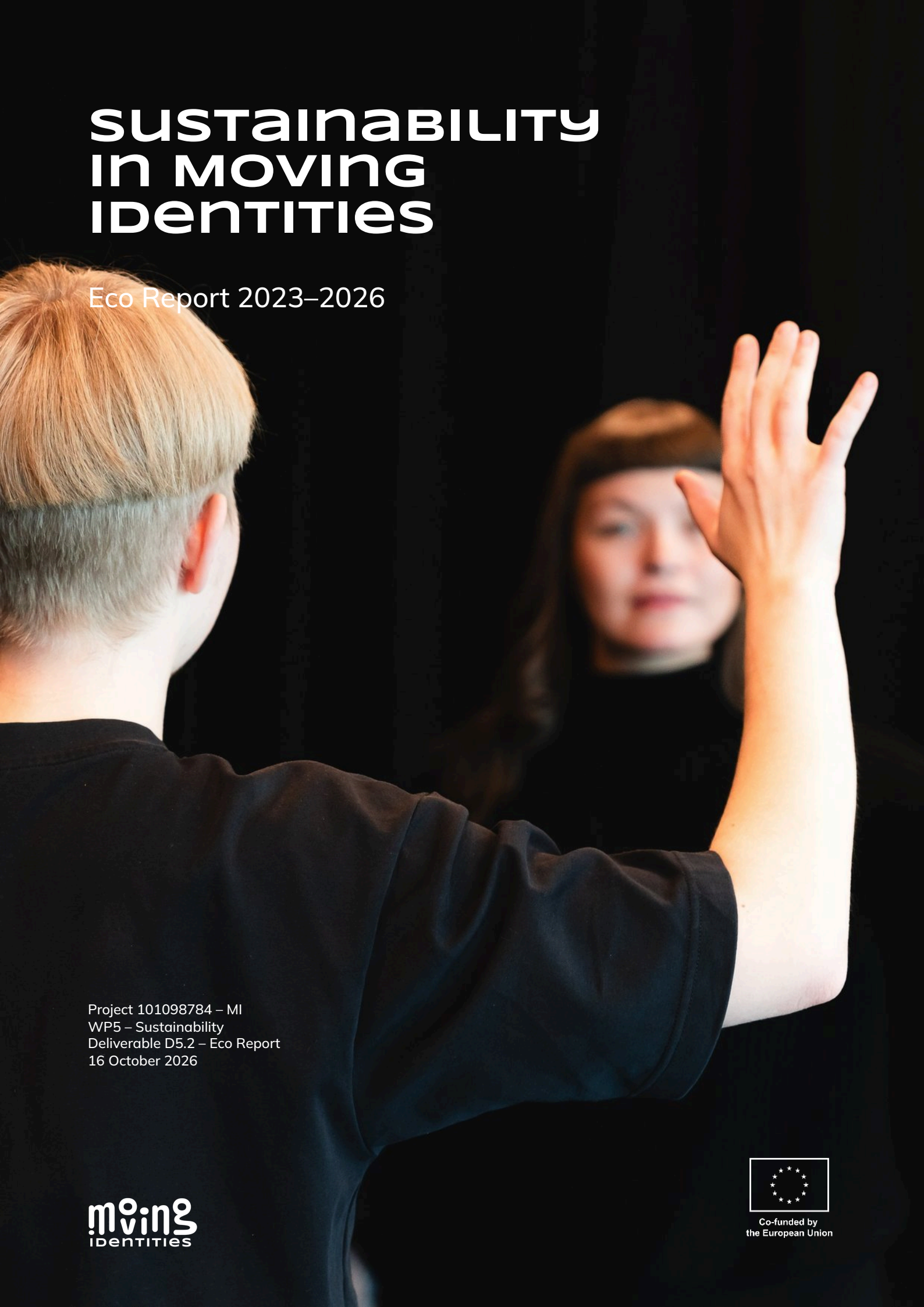
Sustainability in Moving Identities

Eco Report 2023–2026



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Moving Identities

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Table of Contents

4 Introduction

6 Sustainability in Moving Identities

7 Carbon Footprint and Mobility

15 The Eco Travel Map

16 Sustainability in Partner Workshops

18 Sustainability in Mentoring

19 Key Learnings and Challenges

21 Recommendations

22 Conclusion

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SUSTAINABILITY

/ səˌsteɪnəˈbɪlɪti /

> Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

– Definition of sustainability from the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987.

Introduction

At a time when we, as human beings on this planet, consume the equivalent of four planets, we must ask ourselves:

What are our needs?

And who are we in this context?

Introduction

Sustainability has been a central concern throughout the Moving Identities project. As an international residency programme connecting artists, organisations and venues across great distances in Europe, the project has had to navigate, as a central theme, the opportunities and challenges associated with mobility, international collaboration and environmental responsibility.



From the outset, Moving Identities sought to explore how artistic exchange across borders could be balanced with growing concerns regarding climate impact and sustainable working methods. Rather than viewing sustainability solely as a question of carbon reduction, the project approached it as a broader challenge involving mobility, accessibility, care, artistic development and institutional responsibility.

This report reflects on the sustainability activities undertaken throughout the project, including work on carbon footprint and mobility, partner workshops, mentoring activities and the development of the Eco Travel Map. The report summarises the main experiences, challenges and learnings that emerged during the three-year collaboration and concludes with recommendations for future European cooperation projects.

Sustainability in Moving Identities

Sustainability is typically broken down into three core dimensions – often called People, Planet and Profit:

People
Promoting human rights, labour fairness, diversity, community health, and equal opportunity.

Planet
Protecting ecosystems, reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and preventing biodiversity loss or pollution.

Profit
Creating stable, long-term financial growth and operational viability without relying on the destruction of natural or human capital.

Initially, the primary focus on sustainability in the Moving Identities project was *the planet* aspect, especially concerning how international travel was approached throughout the residency programme. We wanted to emphasise the importance of slow travel with the intention of minimising carbon emissions among artists, partners, mentors, etc. over a period of three years.

The project brought together partners from Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Latvia, Norway and Spain, so there was a strong incentive to investigate alternative ways of travelling and to inspire, influence and make an impact related to carbon emissions with many actors involved in the project. While international exchange was central to the project's objectives, it became clear to us, at an early stage, that slow travel and mobility themselves present a contradiction: artistic exchange often depends on physical travel, yet travel also contributes to environmental impact.

So how do those ends meet?

And what are the costs of travelling, both physically and mentally?

The practice of slow travel requires something extraordinary for most people, because we are used to simply getting on a plane and moving from A to B, but now we are here to change that game, if possible. What emerged from this practice was both interesting and surprising.

As our understanding of the word and the practice of sustainability developed, we also developed other approaches to working with it. Sustainability evolved from being understood primarily as a mobility issue to becoming a broader question concerning how international collaborations are designed, supported and maintained.

Moving Identities sought to explore the contradictions, dilemmas and challenges openly. The project became a testing ground for balancing artistic ambition, inclusion, accessibility, care and environmental responsibility, and sustainability informed discussions about project design, collaboration methods, artist support structures and institutional responsibility.

Carbon footprint and mobility

Carbon footprint and mobility

One of the central sustainability initiatives was the systematic documentation of travel related to the residency programme. The project monitored mobility patterns connected to residencies and international exchanges in order to better understand both the environmental impact of the programme and its emotional, physical and mental impact.

We created a survey unlike most other surveys, which was shared with each travelling artist, partner and mentor in the programme. The survey ranged from basic, informal empirical questions to more personal questions concerning the physical and mental state of presence while travelling by train, bus or plane over long distances. Furthermore, we wanted to better understand what sustainability actually means to artists, because it is such a broad and frequently used term that it tends to lose its actual meaning. We wanted to identify opportunities for improvement and develop a better understanding of the theme.

The findings, reflections and quotations presented throughout this report are primarily drawn from responses to this survey, unless otherwise stated.



The following section presents selected survey questions and excerpts from participants' responses, offering a sense of the themes and reflections that emerged.

Question: What is your present condition?
- take a few deep breaths, maybe even close your eyes, tune in on yourself and describe how you feel in this very moment. Are you tired, excited, worried or happy? Use a maximum of three words to describe your present condition.

Answers:

- *Exhausted, peaceful, happy*
- *Relaxed, anxious, inspired*
- *Slow, happy, nervous*
- *Resilient, patient, tired*
- *Tired, impatient, excited*
- *Slow, happy, nervous*

Sustainability is a word of many facets, colours, meanings - many identities.

Question: How will you describe your relation to the word sustainability?

Answers:

> *Sustainability for me is providing support to our necessities without generating extra effort for our colleagues and environment energy. Sustainable is an osmosis of all things combined.*

> *Conscious decision making*

> *In broad terms – how things can keep living, existing, happening. In my work – how I can keep working without burning out, getting injured, or lose track completely of myself.*

> *Sustainability feels like a constant battle, between personal, collective and structural responsibility. Sustainability is picking the option which is the most green within the financial and time resources at my disposal.*

> *Sustainability to me is circumstantial. It is often used as a blanket term, and I prefer to be in constant relation to sustainability in a more local way. I combination of assessing capacity, time, and impact. Of course longer archs of ecological sustainability can co-exist and frame/shape the more immediate/personal sustainability.*

> *I have a difficult relationship with the word sustainability. On the one hand, I think it is extremely important, and one of the few ways forward for our species. On the other, I see how big corporations use the word to "greenwash" their own industries, handing the responsibility over to individual persons when there should be sweeping reforms, regulations, and complete halts to extractivism.*

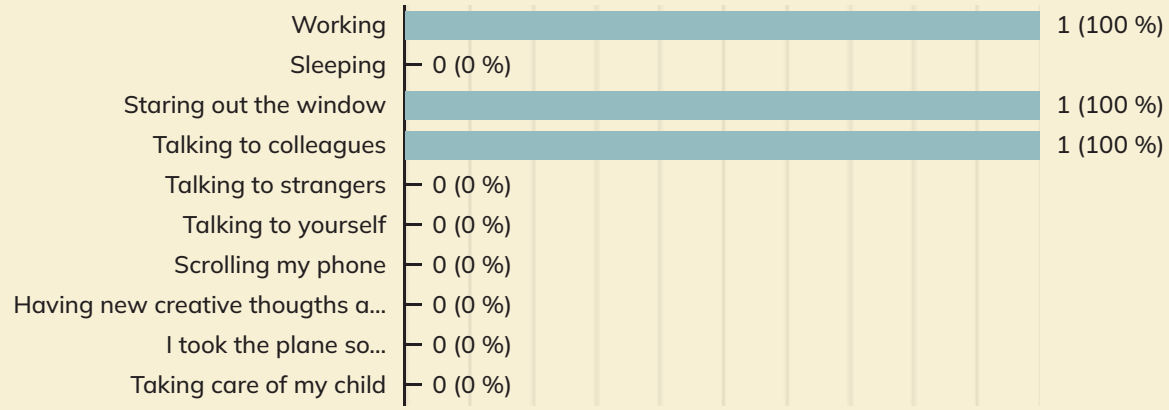
> *For me, sustainability at the level of traveling is seen as a privilege. The privilege of those who can decide to travel by different means (train, electric car, bicycle, etc...). When you have functional diversity you cannot choose to travel in a "sustainable" way, you have to adjust to the possibilities according to your condition. When we talk about sustainability, **we leave out bodily sustainability** - which bodies can endure a train trip with so many hours without it harming health.*

> *For me, it's complicated. I think sustainability is a great idea and one we should all work towards, but as a privileged person in a Western society I feel that sustainability is something that I can afford, which people in other societies might not be able to. At the same time I can afford it while still profiting from extractivist policies in the rest of the world. I think true sustainability would mean a global movement to dismantle capitalist systems and not something that is just used as a pretty word for greenwashing.*

One of the main intentions for this project, in relation to sustainability, is to explore new ways of traveling and to reduce the CO2-emissions for traveling. Fast-travel (plane) is the easiest, fastest, and oftentimes the cheapest way of traveling. We would like to challenge that, which is why, in most cases, you have to allocate an extra day or two when traveling. We want to transition to SLOW-TRAVEL.

This gives us a unique invitation to reflect on, what this means to be a human, an artist, an organizer - as an individual. It also invites us to reflect on what it means to us as a collective - viewing this project "Moving Identities" as an organism assembled by various institutions and artists. In the following questions we invite you to investigate this and share your thoughts and feelings around slow-travel. Ready?

Question: If you are slow-traveling, how did you spend your time while traveling?

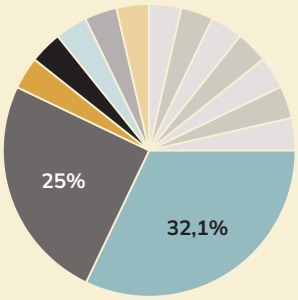


Question: How will you describe your mental health experiences before, during, and after slow -traveling?

Answers:

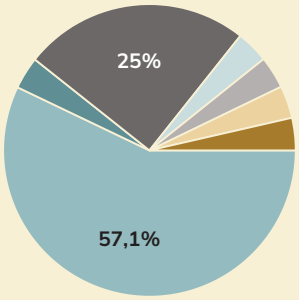
- *I like it*
- *restless*
- *I realize I need more slowness in my life*
- *even stressed*
- *I dislike it*
- *I get bored*
- *Tirying*
- *Anxiety of missing next trains.*
- *but also tiring*
- *Mixed feeling*
- *My life in a wheelchair is slow enough*
- *It is important for everyone to accept slowtravel. We would not mind to even split the travel in two days, with the booking of an accommodation in between to be more sustainable. The only downside is that* ***it is not economically sustainable for the artists that are not getting any per diem or sometimes not being paid for those two days*** *(4 day back and forth), and for a freelance stardad, yearly wise is quite a lot.*

Question: How does it affect you physically to use "slow-travel"?



- It's okay - my body is fine
- It's not okay - my body gets sore
- I get physically tired
- I'm energized
- It would be quite something to deal wit...
- we weren't able to slow travel
- It's a challenge, and time is the bigges...
- Back pains

Question: How does it affect you creatively to use slow-travel?



- I'm not inspired - I can't concentrate
- I'm inspired because I get extra time to think/feel/be creative
- I'm in between
- I'm not creative, I'm administrative
- I get excited because I get some extra...
- I'm just living the present and enjoying...
- I would be distressed about accessibili...
- It would affect me on issues such as t...
- took plane

Question: Finally, do you have any specific comments you would like to share with us, please do so here.

Answers:

> *If artists will start to use more slow-travel, then they will have to be supported more economically, but also in an organization point of view. Traveling is already tirying enough, so it there is not any help from the organization, or any per diem, then it will become more stressful than fullfilling.*

> *Slow travel is often not accessible and expensive.*

> *For the slow travel, I need more flexible traveling schedule. If it takes 2~3days by trains in a row. My body was suffering to sit 28 hours in row and I was so anxious of missing next connections checking several hours looking for another connections. I think if we add 1~2days flexibility on the original schedule so that I can take a break in one or two city for a night, it would become much more pleasant slow journey and less worry of missing next connections.*

> *Particularly with the dancing body - over 8 hours of continued travel can have a negative impact beyond the travel day itself and into the subsequent working days. Exhaustion, soreness, stiffness, pain.*

> *We believe that the conversation around sustainability and green travel needs to be completely rethought – especially in relation to where artists are based. There should also be a broader discussion about time efficiency, financial efficiency, and how these factors affect process and creativity.*

> *Most freelance artists are not privileged to have five extra hours to travel slowly, because our time is our income. We are usually paid only when we are physically present and working in a space. So when we choose slow travel, we spend not only our time and energy but also lose opportunities to earn. In this sense, we are a very vulnerable group.*

> *I appreciate the need for slow travel and want to honour that as much as possible. It is an enjoyable process and an important transition to make. However, without an artist fee for additional time spent travelling, it feels unfair for the artist to absorb this burden of time with no payment in an industry that already offers low rates and often requires you to be in different countries and cities quickly.*

As these responses show, the survey provided valuable insight into both practical and structural challenges associated with slow travel for artists.

Several observations emerged:

- Geographic realities influence available travel options.
- Accessibility needs can limit sustainable travel alternatives.
- Travel time often represents a significant barrier to low-carbon mobility.
- Slow travel frequently requires additional financial resources.
- Slow travel requires extra time, which needs to be included in the budget.
- Environmental considerations must be balanced against artistic and personal needs.

The project demonstrated that mobility decisions are rarely straightforward. Artists based in remote regions, in this case Hammerfest in the north of Norway, often face limited transport options, while artists with accessibility requirements may encounter additional restrictions.

The carbon footprint data therefore provided more than numerical documentation. It also highlighted the structural conditions that shape mobility choices and exposed the complexity of implementing sustainable practices across diverse European contexts.

> Let's share. Let's go slowly. I take only what I need.
>
> – Survey respondent, Moving Identities

The Eco Travel Map

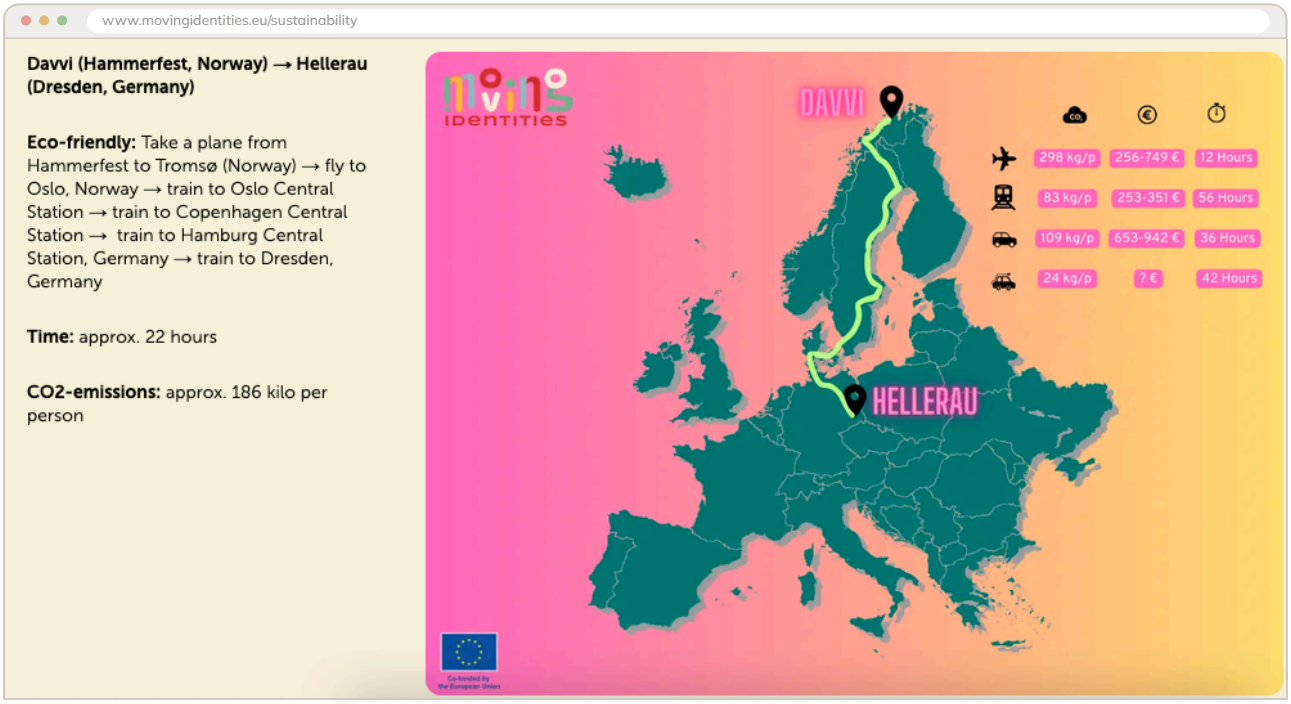
The Eco Travel Map was developed as a practical tool for documenting and reflecting on mobility within the project.

The purpose was not only to record travel behaviour but also to increase awareness among participants and partners and create a shared basis for dialogue around sustainability.

The mapping process revealed significant differences between countries, regions and travel conditions. It became clear that sustainability cannot be measured solely through distance travelled or chosen modes of transportation. Questions of accessibility, travel infrastructure, financial resources and personal circumstances all influenced travel behaviour, and these questions were included in the surveys shared with each participant.

The Eco Travel Map therefore became both a data collection tool and a learning instrument. It encouraged participants to reflect on the environmental consequences of mobility while simultaneously highlighting the limitations artists and organisations face when attempting to make sustainable choices.

One of the key insights from the mapping exercise was that sustainable mobility must be approached as a shared responsibility. Individual artists cannot be expected to solve structural challenges alone. Meaningful change requires coordinated efforts from artists, organisations, venues, funders and policymakers.



Find the map here: www.movingidentities.eu/sustainability

Sustainability in partner workshops

In some of the workshops we hosted as Sustainable Culture NOW, we introduced Theatre Green Book as a method and a tool for navigating sustainability and making simple, clear decisions and actions. Theatre Green Book was created in Britain by professionals in the performing arts industry, especially from the National Theatre in London. In the EU, it is considered the leading method and tool for accelerating the green transition in the performing arts sector.

It is widely known and used by thousands of theatres and institutions worldwide and it provides a standard for sustainable practices across productions, operations and buildings.

We wanted to introduce Theatre Green Book to our partners, both venue and strategic partners, because it offers a common, simplified language for the complexity of sustainability, green mobility, etc. For us, it was



a way to create a common ground for understanding what we are working with and for knowledge sharing.

THE THEATRE GREEN BOOK

Theatre Green Book is an industry-wide initiative to work more sustainably in response to the climate crisis. It is a free resource for everyone in the performing arts, working in any role and at all scales, providing a framework for planning, best practice guidance, a measurement system and shared standards.

Generally speaking, sustainability was a recurring topic in workshops and discussions among our partners throughout the project period. We exchanged experiences regarding mobility, artist support, accessibility, inclusion and institutional responsibility. These conversations revealed that environmental sustainability is often closely connected to social sustainability.

Several recurring questions emerged:

- Who is responsible for sustainable mobility?
- How can organisations support artists in making sustainable choices?
- How can accessibility and sustainability be balanced?
- What resources are needed to implement sustainable practices?
- How can institutions move from intention to action?

The partner workshops demonstrated that sustainability is rarely a technical issue alone. Instead, it is closely linked to organisational structures, decision-making processes and available resources.

Partners repeatedly emphasised the need for transparency, realistic expectations and long-term planning when implementing sustainability initiatives.



Sustainability in Mentoring

Mentoring activities provided an additional space for discussing sustainability within artistic practice and career development.

Although sustainability was not always the primary focus of mentoring sessions, it frequently emerged through broader conversations about international collaboration, touring, mobility and artistic working conditions. And especially regarding working conditions something very interesting emerged: the *care rider*.

When working with sustainable touring we have introduced a green rider, which is related to a *tech rider*: a list of the technical equipment that needs to be in place when setting up a performance or a show in a new venue.

The same principle applies to the green rider, which is a guide from the artists to the venue addressing what the artists need or wish to have in place in relation to sustainability. For example:

Only vegetarian fruits, food, drinks
Only public transport
No plastic bottles
Only Green Key certified hotels
Only LED lights

Now, the *care rider* provides suggestions and specific requirements related to the body/the person who is coming to a new venue to work and perform. It is a guide to help the venue better understand who this person is and what this person needs in terms of pronouns, language, touch, personal/private space, etc.

So, we're suddenly dealing with a much broader and more inclusive perspective on the concept of sustainability. As one person mentioned in a mentoring session:

> *In order for me to take actions in sustainable practices when I'm touring, I need to feel safe and secure. I need to relax my nervous system and my body needs to be in sync with the rest of my being in order to perform and do well. You can call it bodily sustainability or* ***human sustainability****.*

Mentors and mentees reflected on how artists can develop international careers while responding to environmental concerns. Discussions often highlighted the need to prioritise quality over quantity and to build stronger long-term partnerships rather than relying on frequent short-term travel.

The mentoring activities also demonstrated that sustainability is closely connected to professional development. Sustainable careers require sustainable working methods, realistic expectations and support structures that allow artists to work internationally without placing disproportionate demands on their personal resources.

These conversations reinforced the idea that sustainability is not limited to environmental concerns but also includes social and economic dimensions.

Key Learnings and Challenges

Key Learnings and Challenges

Several key learnings emerged from the project.

First, sustainability and care are deeply interconnected. Sustainable mobility cannot be considered separately from accessibility, inclusion, wellbeing and working conditions.

Second, long-term relationships offer a more sustainable model for international collaboration than short-term project-based encounters. Trust, continuity and repeated exchanges create both stronger artistic outcomes and more efficient use of resources.

Third, environmental ambitions often exceed available resources. Sustainable practices require funding, planning and institutional support. They cannot simply be added to existing activities without additional investment.

Fourth, mobility remains both necessary and problematic. International exchange continues to play a crucial role in artistic development, yet its environmental impact cannot be ignored. The challenge lies not in eliminating mobility but in making it more thoughtful, intentional and sustainable.

Finally, sustainability should be understood as a shared responsibility. Artists, organisations, venues, funders and policymakers all play important roles in creating the conditions necessary for meaningful change.



Recommendations

For cultural organisations

- Integrate sustainability into long-term strategic planning rather than treating it as a project-specific concern.
- Develop transparent and ambitious policies regarding mobility, accessibility and environmental responsibility.
- Invest in longer-term partnerships that reduce the need for repeated short-term travel.
- Stop feeding the American tech industry - swap platforms and technical infrastructure and use European companies instead, e.g. Proton instead of Google.

For funders

- Recognise that sustainable mobility (slow travel) often requires additional resources.
- Recognise that travelling artists should be honoured financially when choosing to slow travel.
- Support longer-term collaborations and slower forms of international exchange.
- Acknowledge care-related costs as legitimate sustainability expenses.

For international projects

- Prioritise relationship-building and continuity.
- Consider environmental impact when designing project structures.
- Balance mobility objectives with accessibility and inclusion goals.

For all

- Sustainability should not be treated as an add-on to existing activities. Meaningful sustainable practices require dedicated resources, time, funding and prioritisation.
- Sustainability is not achieved through awareness alone but through structural support and long-term commitment.
- Ambitious and truly sustainable practices require radical shifts and bold moves, giving up privileges and customary habits.

conclusion

Moving Identities has demonstrated that sustainability in international cultural cooperation is both necessary and complex.

Throughout the project, sustainability evolved from a focus on mobility and carbon footprint towards a broader understanding incorporating care, accessibility, institutional responsibility and long-term collaboration. The project highlighted that environmental sustainability cannot be separated from social sustainability and that both must be considered and acted upon simultaneously.

Talking about it is not enough!

The experiences generated through the survey, the Eco Travel Map, partner workshops, mentoring activities and residency exchanges underline the importance of addressing sustainability as an ongoing process rather than a fixed destination.

The project does not provide definitive answers. However, it offers practical experiences, critical reflections and concrete recommendations that may contribute to more sustainable forms of international collaboration within the European performing arts sector.

Which brings us back to the initial question, extracted from the Brundtland definition of sustainability:

What are our needs?
and
Who are we?

If sustainability, according to Brundtland, is about "***meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs***"



we need to be very clear on what the needs are. Because we are, as Europeans, very rich (generally speaking). We have everything we need in terms of food, shelter, accessibility, technology etc. We have many of these goods because we have extracted resources and energy from some far-away, underdeveloped country in which people are working under horrible conditions to provide what we need on this continent to "be more green" or "be more sustainable and reduce carbon emissions".

Our "needs" in the present time are far beyond what the Planet can provide in the long run, which means that the present and future are already being compromised!

We need to reduce, reduce, reduce and use only what the Planet can offer us, so that the Planet can sustain itself. And we need to practice the ability to sustain ourselves without compromising the wellbeing of our Sacred Planet Earth.

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.

movingidentities.eu

@movingidentitieseurope

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moving identities