

TERMINOLOGY

# International professional development programmes

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**Learning Trajectories – Advancing European performing arts mentoring programmes – is an ERASMUS+ funded project, coordinated by EUNIA (Sweden), in collaboration with FACE - Fresh Arts Coalition Europe (France), Matera Hub (Italy) and On the Move (Belgium).**

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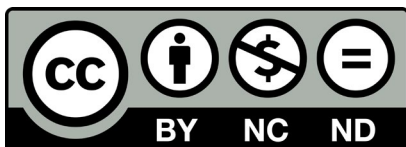
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## About the Learning Trajectories project

Learning Trajectories aims to investigate ways to best design and implement mentoring programmes supporting the international career development of live arts professionals.

Nowadays it is generally recognised that internationalisation can benefit the overall performing arts sector in terms of enhancement of artistic, economic and human relations, impacting both the career of the individual art worker and the wellbeing of the entire sector. However, there is still a knowledge gap among organisations and professionals with regards to methods, approaches and practices. Key challenges include how to organise and implement these schemes, how to deal with specific needs and circumstances, how to properly facilitate programmes and what the hosting context is during the internationalisation experience.

In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has made it even more imperative to rethink internationalisation processes, given its impact on mobility and on the finances of performing arts institutions and organisations.

The partners' objectives are, on the one hand, to highlight best practices and examples of mentoring programmes developed, supported or facilitated by intermediary organisations or funding organisations, and on the other hand to advance the quality of mentoring programmes that support the internationalisation of the European performing arts sector.

This project has been articulated around three main areas of investigation and experimentation:

- Which mentoring methodologies and tools can be used and further developed to support culture professionals in their internationalisation journey?
- How can the access to key resources and relevant professional information from other countries and markets, different cultural spaces and ecosystems be facilitated?
- How can curated mobility experiences and prospecting trips for live art stakeholders be organised, from preparation to implementation and follow-ups?

The partners collaborate to:

- design three guides/online practical toolkits to 1) help live art professionals and organisations to initiate and further develop international mentoring programmes, 2) propose ways for the performing arts sector to be better equipped to engage in a new context (country, region, sector, etc.) and 3) strengthen the capacity of intermediary organisations to support the overall prospecting process;

- provide opportunities to share and exchange best practices (both internally and externally), to engage in professional development for all staff members and to develop a more dynamic and timely professional setting where the challenges of today can be addressed, both in each partner organisation's context as well as on a European level;
- develop improved and accessible working methodologies to encourage international prospecting as a solid strategy to be embedded in mentoring schemes, while working together to increase the arts and culture sector's capacity and ability to operate internationally, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

All documents prepared on the course of the project target:

- trainers and mentors of intermediary organisations providing expertise to cultural managers, producers and artists who seek to operate internationally but who still lack the tools and methodologies to do so;
- cultural managers, producers and artists seeking to develop their capacity to operate in a European or international context and who currently have limited experience or who need to strategize their approach in a better way;
- European networks and platforms that support the international capacity of their members to operate in a European or international context and that have limited experiences or a need to strategize their approach in a better way.

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# Terminology and roles

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*These definitions of essential terms and roles serve as references for the various guides published. They invite professional development programme organisers, facilitators and participants to reflect upon, discuss and question the terminology adopted by the partners of the Learning Trajectories project*

## Internationalisation

*Internationalisation is a strategy that allows cultural professionals and operators to expand and develop internationally. This process often takes place in order to take advantage of new opportunities offered by other countries and foreign markets.*

Errol Boon recalls that for centuries, the intrinsic value of an international dimension was obvious to most European artists: “The central truism that artistic practice should never be limited by contingent national borders led to the idea that cultural exchange between artists or audiences from different countries had the potential to fundamentally broaden the artist’s perspective beyond the limits in which bourgeois citizens were caught up. Hence, the opportunity of internationalisation became one of the key indications of artistic freedom”<sup>1</sup>. However, we observe that globalisation is often experienced as a requirement imposed on artists by the intensely globalized and competitive sector they inhabit. For many artists, internationalisation is an absolute necessity in order to survive.

We think of what it means to internationalise one’s network, creative activities, and potential sources of financial support in the broadest possible way. This means going beyond thinking about export strategies for expanding the potential markets for one’s work. It may include: mutually beneficial collaborations; residencies; training; visible and meaningful acts of solidarity; and economic, environmental and mobility justice<sup>2</sup>. It involves the creation of, and participation in, online spaces, as well as the physical crossing of national borders.

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<sup>1</sup> Errol Boon: ‘What does cultural internationalisation mean anno 2021?’ (Amsterdam: DutchCulture, July 2019): <https://dutchculture.nl/en/news/what-does-cultural-internationalisation-mean-anno-2021>.

<sup>2</sup> See Mimi Sheller: *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes* (London: Verso Books, 2018).

## Live art worker

*Professional active in the field of the performing arts, whatever their action in the value chain and their hierarchical level, whether or not they are directly involved in the act of creation.*

In the term live art, we include traditional performing arts disciplines (theatre, dance, circus, puppetry and music) as well as contemporary practitioners that are, as the Live Art Development Agency puts it, 'exploring the possibilities of the live event and the ways we can experience it'<sup>3</sup>. In the term art workers, we mean to insist upon and make visible the many types of skilled labour (creative, technical, administrative and managerial) necessary for cultural production.

## Professional development programme

*An organised set of experiences that support learning in identified areas of continuous improvement and enrichment of live art workers' professional pathway for the renewal or upgrading of practices.*

We have chosen to use the term professional development, which places the focus on desired outcomes, as opposed to terms like mentoring or coaching, which describe particular kinds of relationships. By programmes, we mean a series of events that take place over an extended amount of time (often a minimum of several months), as opposed to shorter-term happenings such as seminars, workshops or intensives.

## Organiser

*A person or an organisation that plans and executes a professional development programme.*

The primary role of the third-party organiser of a professional development programme is to create a structured space in which participants and facilitators are set up for success. The organiser must be able to repeatedly communicate clearly about all aspects of the programme and to model, through action, the values that are the driving force behind its initiatives. In many cases, the strength of an organiser's public image can lend prestige and visibility to individuals who may be less well known in their professional sector.

Organisers need to be aware that they are part of a wider ecology in which they apply for funding, contract freelancers and are involved in day-to-day implementation activities. This means that they do not always have the distance or objectivity to neutrally assess the field.

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<sup>3</sup> 'What is live art', Live Art Development Agency, <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about-lada/what-is-live-art>

## Facilitator

*Someone who partakes in a professional development programme to facilitate the creative, relational and/or business growth of another person*

On the most basic level, facilitators help participants to identify, articulate and move towards specific goals, often by sharing their perspective, knowledge and contacts, and sometimes by acting as mentors. They are focused on the needs of the participants and can be flexible and adapt as those needs evolve over time. They are empathetic and curious and, ideally, have the ability to ask questions that prompt reflection. They are honest about their own experiences, they respectfully allow room for difference and disagreement, and they can be trusted with sensitive or confidential information. It should not be assumed that facilitators need to be older than participants. Particular attention should be given to potential conflicts of interest or competition between facilitators and participants.

## Participant

*Someone who partakes in a professional development programme to grow his or her network, business and/or creative practice.*

As mature, adult professionals, participants should be encouraged to hold themselves responsible for driving their own professional development and to act accordingly. Within the framework of a programme, participants can – and often do – learn just as much from exchanging with each other as they do from facilitators.

Participants who are freelancers or who work within small, independent companies can face particular challenges, including a high turnover of administrative support and a potentially limited bandwidth for reflection. For some live art workers, collaboration is an integral part of their practice and they have chosen to work primarily within a duo or as part of a larger, non-hierarchical collective. Organisers would do well to consider in advance if, and how, they plan to accommodate participants with distinct ways of working, needs and challenges.

## Cultural mobility experience

*A temporary cross-border movement, often for educational, capacity-building, networking or working purposes.*

A cultural mobility experience may have tangible or intangible outputs in the short term, and/or be part of a long-term professional development process. International mobility is a central component of the professional trajectory of artists and culture professionals. Research shows that the professional development programmes with an international focus provide one or several



mobility experiences to their participants as part of the learning trajectory. Mobility is seen as a component of a given programme and supports the participant taking action and putting into practice their strategy.

Cultural mobility entails opportunities for live art workers to be in contact with another context in another country through dedicated resources, experiences that can be organised for groups or individuals (such as professional visits, encounters and conversations) and follow-ups (to start a project, strengthen ideas or confirm touring). Such exposure to a foreign region helps in developing a familiarity or understanding of the norms, values and beliefs of that region.

## Context profile

*Resources presenting a foreign context that will help participants and live art workers discover, understand and connect with another art scene.*

‘Context profile’ is used as an overarching term for different types of content provided to participants to better understand the reality of the territory they want to investigate. Our research identified different terms (info sheets, market profiles, country profiles, mappings, etc.) used according to professional development programmes and countries, but also according to the profile of the organiser – ranging from European cultural network to public mobility funder and other intermediary organisations.

Research shows that the professional development programmes with an international focus provide one or more mobility experiences to their participants as part of the learning trajectory. Mobility is a component of the programme and supports participants in translating their plans into action. To prepare for this mobility, the context profile provides information in relation to a particular country or a macro-region; a short-cut to access consolidated information on another cultural context.

The organiser is in charge of gathering and circulating relevant information to participants. The information can be cross-sectoral; for example, giving an overview of the situation in several creative fields – like cinema, visual arts, heritage or performing arts – in a given country. It can also be thematic, such as focusing on disability arts or international mobility. Finally, it can be sectoral and focus on a particular discipline, like theatre, dance, circus or music.

## Evaluation

*Evaluation is the determination of the value, use, importance and significance of elements put into place, using a set of relevant and agreed criteria. The primary purpose of evaluation, in addition to gaining insight into prior or existing initiatives, is to enable reflection and assist in the identification of future change.*

Evaluation is seen as a process to assess, constantly improve and better communicate the programme. With adequate tools and methodologies (that do

not need to be complex, but consistent and adapted), evaluation is embedded in the programme before its inception until the end. With effective evaluation, the organiser can adapt to change and can have the capacity to meet the needs of the participants and the facilitators.

**Examples of discussion points:**

- What key terms would you chose and how you would define them?*
- What, precisely, does the term 'professional development' mean to you, in your context?*
- How far do you let users challenge or agree with your terminology?*
- How do you avoid blanket terms or buzzwords in your documents?*

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