



Right to Culture



Resource Pack

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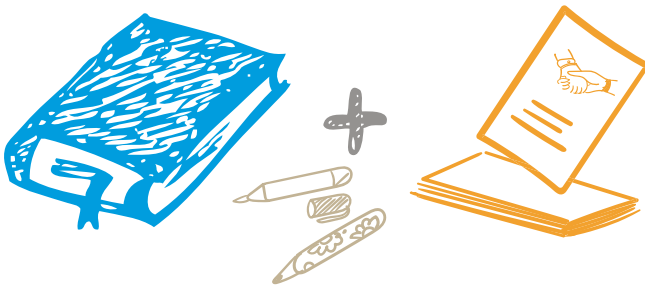
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1. INTRODUCTION

Setting the context

This resource pack is an Arts Council Malta initiative aimed at **increasing awareness regarding inclusivity** and **supporting the implementation of cultural rights** in our day-to-day practice. This forms part of the Council's long-term commitment as outlined in the fourth goal of the Create 2020 Strategy — **Provide more opportunities for people to engage in creativity.**¹ In light of maintaining an open dialogue and listening to the communities' recommendations, this initiative has been carried out in consultation with key players engaged in advocacy and good governance, and participants from diverse community groups.

The resource pack includes two main components:



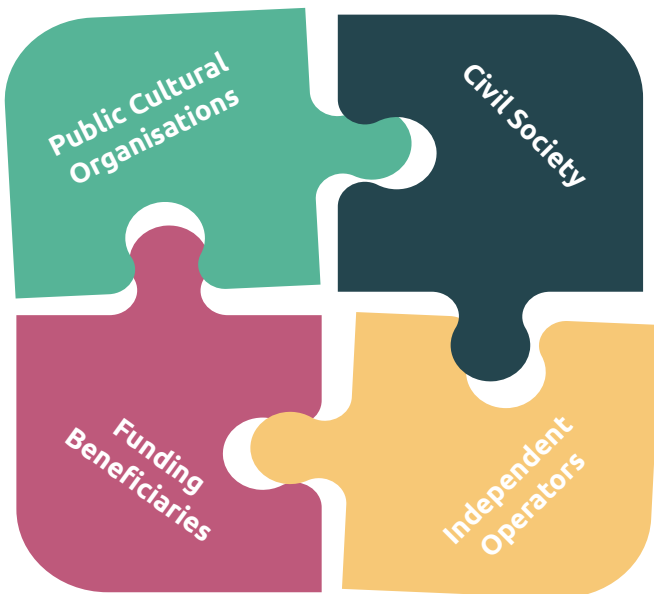
¹Arts Council Malta (2015), *Create 2020 Strategy*, p. 16, available at www.artscouncilmalta.org/files/uploads/misc/English-Create2020_web.pdf

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- A **handbook** that constitutes the following pages, intended as a handy, user-friendly reference guide including some examples of good practice.
- A complementing and enclosed **toolkit** that includes useful tools, templates, lists and references that are required in day-to-day practice.

Who is this resource pack for?

This resource pack is intended as a reference guide and inspiration for anyone working with and for communities while striving for an increase in audience engagement and cultural participation, including, but not limited to:



How can this resource pack be used?

Make it your own!

To make the most of this resource pack we suggest that you make it your own as much as possible:



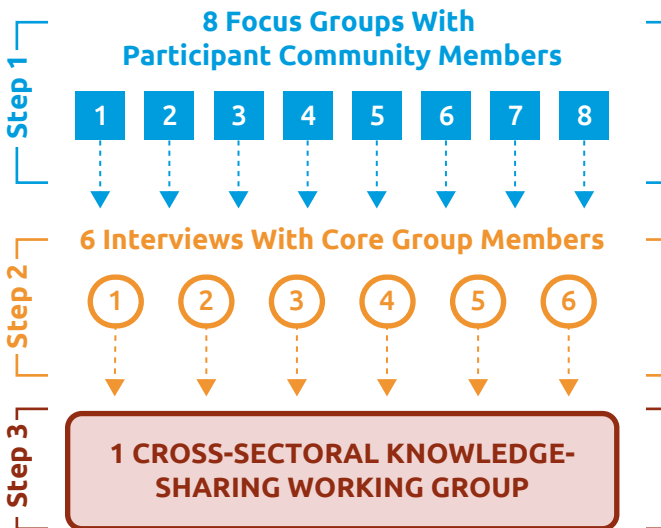
- Read the handbook, go through the toolkit.
- Add your notes and reflections in the spaces provided.
- Share the resource pack with your team and collaborators.
- From time to time, return to the handbook and the toolkit and revisit with fresh ideas.
- Share your work with us – we'd love to hear from you.
- Help us improve future editions of this resource pack.

Get in touch! Email us: info.acm@artscouncil.mt

Methodology

Right from the initial stages, back in the second half of 2019, Arts Council Malta adopted **an open and horizontal approach**. To question and analyse cultural rights, inclusivity, barriers encountered, needs and recommendations, **key players from the sector and participant community members from diverse groups of society** were invited to share their views and stories, and were involved throughout the entire research process.

After initial consultation with the Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHROM), whose guidance was instrumental in identifying the key players from the sector, the process followed these steps:



The eight **focus groups** reflect the needs and recommendations of the **target group communities** identified in the Create 2020 Strategy:

- **Children** aged 6–10
- **Youngsters** aged 11–17
- **Youth** aged 18+
- **Older adults**
- **Hardly-Reached groups²**
- **People with disabilities**
- **People from different ethnic backgrounds**
- **People active in traditional culture**



Each focus group was coordinated by a cultural rights champion³ whose expertise complements the needs of the above community groups.

² This might sound like a rather general target group. Although there are certain needs which can be addressed in a more specific manner, we recognise that we are not put in boxes and our needs can overlap. This group discussed the limitations and challenges encountered as people (or representatives thereof) who are suffering from domestic violence, seeking asylum, sex workers, LGBTIQ, people with intellectual disabilities, and people with transport accessibility issues.

³ A full list of the names and roles of the focus group coordinators can be found in the acknowledgements section.

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Based on the outcomes of these focus groups, academics⁴ specialising in Cultural Management, Marketing and Social Media Engagement devised and carried out a set of **interviews with six core group members**, including Arts Council Malta personnel and focus groups coordinators. These interviews allowed the research process to gain deeper insights on the thematic areas that resulted from the focus groups and how these can be addressed from a policy point of view.



⁴ The academic consultant and two academic associates are identified in the acknowledgements section.

Finally, the material generated through the focus groups was further elaborated by a **cross-sectoral knowledge-sharing working group**, including representatives⁵ from the Secretariat of PHROM, the Human Rights Directorate, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, the Malta Crafts Foundation, the Local Government Division and the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations. The representatives helped to map out possible **recommendations and new directions** for a more inclusive culture that is available for, and accessible by, all.

All the findings of this research process have facilitated and guided the development and creation of this resource pack.

Looking at the wider picture

This resource pack is not a stand-alone; it can only reap its full potential when seen in the wider context. This document is published at a very delicate and particular time.

It is important to point out that this resource pack allows us to look back at, and build on, Arts Council Malta's **2020 Strategy** whilst looking forward towards the upcoming **2025 Strategy**.

⁵A full list of the names and roles of the working group members can be found in the acknowledgements section.

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Another complementing document is the new **National Cultural Policy 2021**, that is also inspired by Cultural Rights.

Last but not least, let's not forget that we find ourselves amidst a series of **global crises** — namely, political conflicts, food insecurity, climate change, challenges encountered by people on the move, and gender inequality — further exacerbated and magnified by the **COVID-19 global pandemic** and its aftermath. Informing our day-to-day practice on the basis of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals can help us address the quality of life and well-being, climate change and the environment, equality and sustainability.

2. WHAT ARE CULTURAL RIGHTS?

What is Culture?

We do not have one definition of culture. Different people can have different views and interpretations of what culture means and what it entails, and one understanding does not necessarily replace another. Focus groups' participants agree that **culture is where minds meet and grow together**, culture **shapes identities and societies** and it helps to increase **a sense of belonging**. This description is supported by the 2020 Rome Charter which describes the following — and we can consider this at least a working definition for our common understanding:

“Culture is **how people form, express, share and negotiate their values** — including those of which they are unconscious or unable to articulate directly. Culture is everything we do beyond survival. **Culture is everything we do to enrich our lives**. It is also the story that shapes our actions, even when we are unaware of it. **Culture describes the world, and we see the world through its lens.**”⁶



⁶ Roma Capitale and UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) — Culture Committee (2020), *The 2020 Rome Charter: The right to participate fully and freely in cultural life is vital to our cities and communities*, p. 4, available at www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/2020_rc_eng_0.pdf

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The cross-sectoral knowledge-sharing working group acknowledges that we are to **understand culture in its widest form**, from band clubs to contemporary dance, from għana to punk rock, from poetry readings to appreciation of local cuisine — all of this is culture. These are just some examples that show the diverse nature of culture and it is by no means an exhaustive list. This understanding allows us to move beyond a product-object-oriented culture and focus on the meanings associated with such practices. As Farida Shaheed, the former UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights (2009–2015), reports:

“I take the broader anthropological view, seeing culture as the manner in which humanity expresses itself — whether through **‘high’ or ‘popular’ culture**. Less about specific manufactured objects than about the meanings assigned to these. More than the food we eat, it encompasses **perceptions of and interaction with other people and nature alike.**”⁷



If we agree that culture is a way of life that relates to how we experience the world we live in, then we can also agree that cultural life has to be flexible so it can adapt

⁷ Shaheed, F. (2011), *Cultural rights: what are these and why are they important for women's right to development?* Paper presented at the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation with UN Special Procedures: Women's Right to Development, p. 3, available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CulturalRights/Culturalrightsofwomen/ASEANwomenconsultation2011-FSstatement.pdf

WHAT ARE CULTURAL RIGHTS?

to the needs of changing societies and communities. Culture is not static; it changes and evolves over time. And this is why we revisit and reinterpret culture, by looking back at the origins while embracing new developments. *(See pages 16 & 17)*

Recognised under Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*,⁸ UNESCO defines 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.”**⁹

This means that cultural rights cannot be separated from other human rights. As laid down in Article 5 of the 2001 UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, **“Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent.”**¹⁰

⁸ Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, “(1) 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. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

⁹ UNESCO (2019), *The Right to Culture*, available at www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/10_Info%20Sheet_Right%20to%20Culture.pdf

¹⁰ UNESCO (2001), *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, available at portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html



What are Cultural rights?



And so, what are Cultural Rights? This question, posed at the beginning of each focus group session, triggered diverse reactions:



"It is the freedom to be oneself."

— People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant

"The right to express oneself and having the tools to do so."

— Youth focus group participants

"When I feel safe, I can talk freely and do speak out. There is the right to disagree and that is good. If that is not there, I keep it to myself."

— Youngsters focus group participant

"The names we give our children, the songs we sing, our clothes, language, what we like, our manners, our attitude towards the environment — all a product of our cultural background."

— Children focus group participant

"It is a right for everyone, but not all take advantage of it. It seems problematic for the cohort of 65+ years old."

— Older adults focus group participant

"We should all have the right to participate both as an audience and as an actor."

— Amy Camilleri Zahra, People with disabilities focus group coordinator



"Cultural rights are a bridge builder."

— Ruth Farrugia, Children and Youngsters focus groups coordinator

"People are not challenged to intervene or give their ideas."

— Older adults focus group participant

"The right to culture is the process of making culture valuable and accessible. Some people have easy access to culture, but this is not the norm for everyone."

— Hardly-reached focus group participant

"One can say that cultural rights are something that you carry with you from your home country to another destination. It is the culture you bring in to the culture you are in."

— People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant

"Offering the space for the new generation to create new ways of culture (e.g. underground music)."

— Youth focus group participant

"Traditional culture is not less important than other forms of culture."

— People active in traditional culture focus group participant

"People active in the arts are more aware of their rights than others."

— Youth focus group participant

"The right to express yourself as you are, without being judged."

— People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant

"Sometimes we feel that we are silenced. Hugging for instance is banned at school. [This was before the pandemic.] We do not do things to rebel, we want to obey and make our teachers proud, but give us a break. Let us breathe."

— Youngsters focus group participant

"The right to participate."

— Youth focus group participant



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Therefore, cultural rights are as important as civil, economic, political and social rights. It is crucial that cultural rights are mainstreamed and we start recognising this interdependence of human rights.

In just a few months, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this need and illustrated a number of gaps in our societies. As former UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights (2015–2021) Karima Bennoune reports, in our response to the pandemic, and as a coping mechanism, resorting to the enjoyment of culture and creativity increased; however, people employed in the arts and culture found it difficult — at times impossible — to produce and express themselves. This discrepancy is further threatened with the closure of cultural sites, be they artistic and/or community. English actor, writer and theatre director Simon Callow notes that, “The point of the arts is connection — interconnectedness. The vocabulary of the pandemic is at war with the vocabulary of art.”¹¹ Therefore, “urgent action is needed to resolve this tension and guarantee the cultural rights of all.” (Bennoune 2021)¹²

¹¹ Callow S. (2021), during his contribution to the webinar *Preventing “Cultural Catastrophe” in the Pandemic: A Cultural Rights Approach*, organised by Artists at Risk Connection, PEN America and Humanists International, held on 9th March 2021. A recording of the event can be watched at www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=242270457539367&ref=watch_permalink

¹² Bennoune, K. (2021), COVID-19, culture and cultural rights — Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, para. 5, p. 4, available at digitallibrary.un.org/record/3907050?ln=en

WHAT ARE CULTURAL RIGHTS?

If we take a look at the impact of the pandemic on the local scenario, we can realise the imbalance that exists in the relationship between the right to culture and the right to education. In adapting to the new normal, some schools have sidelined artistic subjects (among others) from their timetables, redeploing respective educators in the arts to replacement or generalist teaching positions. Arts education carried outside mainstream school hours has also been marginalised and has suffered greatly. As we mainstream our right to culture, it is time to also remove labels such as ‘extra-curricular’, that are often associated with subjects in the arts, and instead recognise the benefits that artistic and cultural education have in shaping us to become critical thinkers.

“A quality education in culture and the arts is a prerequisite for society to develop awareness of one’s cultural identity and to cultivate cultural demand. Arts and culture education being a mandatory part of school curricula from a young age drives interest and engagement.”



— Désirée Attard, Human Rights Directorate

Bennoune points out that cultural rights are not a luxury, even during a global pandemic, and are fundamental in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Callow agrees that the arts “have a vital indispensable task; they too are a national health service — the gymnasium of the

RIGHT TO CULTURE

imagination, the rest cure of the soul — not a luxury but a guarantee of the well-being of the community.” The global health crisis has shown us that the full enjoyment of cultural rights depends on the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. Therefore, once again, the right to culture, the right to science and the right to health are closely interlinked.

Hence, “the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social — are fundamental tenets of international human rights law.”¹³ This is the way forward to guarantee a **cultural democracy** that includes **all citizens** on the basis of **equality** and **without discrimination**.

“Cultural life is not just about an event but it is part of us, of our community and how we participate together. Cultural life is not a stand-alone activity, it is who we are.”

— Neil Falzon, Head of Secretariat, PHROM



¹³ United Nations (2005), Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Handbook for National Human Rights Institutions, available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training12en.pdf

3. OUR DIVERSITY, OUR STRENGTH

Celebrating our diversity

The relationship between culture and diversity is one that has been well-documented. As Farida Shaheed (2011) reports, “No society ever has just one singular culture [and] identity is not singular. Each individual is the bearer of a multiple and complex identity, making her or him a unique being. Individuals identify themselves in numerous ways. Hence, they participate simultaneously in several communities of shared cultural values.”¹⁴ Similarly, we have **a multiplicity and diversity of cultures.**

”
“We live in a multicultural society — different traditions, different religions ... It is less about citizenship and more about personal experiences.”

“ — Youngsters focus group participant

¹⁴ Shaheed, F. (2011), *Cultural rights: what are these and why are they important for women's right to development?*, paper presented at the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation with UN Special Procedures: Women's Right to Development, p. 4, available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CulturalRights/Culturalrightsofwomen/ASEA_womenconsultation2011-FSstate ment.pdf

”
“Malta has a very diverse culture in itself. It took something from all cultures that passed in history. It was a transition for different people. Everyone left their footprint, even in the language.”

“ — People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant

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The cross-sectoral knowledge-sharing working group describes communities as a **texture of diversity**. The members of the working group recognise the benefits that different narratives and different experiences can have when shared together, enriching our life. **Cultural**

equity embodies values and practices that ensure that **all people** — including, but not limited to, those who have been historically under-represented based on race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status or religion — are represented in the development of cultural policy. By integrating diverse cultural elements together, we are preparing a fertile ground to get to know each other and get past our distrust, fear and prejudice.

“Diversity is enriching, let’s work together, rather than be afraid. Because we’re different we can create better results.”

— Hardly-reached focus group participant

“The cohort we call ‘elderly’ is very diverse in itself, with diverse needs and interests. The elderly cannot be addressed as one group.”

— Older adults focus group participant

Indeed, the 2016 Council of Europe Thematic report states, “**exposure to culture allows people to recognise the importance of diversity**, thereby increasing their openness towards other

OUR DIVERSITY, OUR STRENGTH

”When you are an actor in the arts, then most probably you are more exposed and more positive about the richness of diversity than other youngsters.”

— Youth focus group participant

groups in society.”¹⁵ Likewise, diversity allows people “to encourage creativity and participation in cultural activities, and **to foster economic development and conflict reduction.**”¹⁶ On the same note, the 2020 Rome Charter describes culture as “the creative workshop with which citizens can **imagine responses to our common challenges.**”¹⁷

”The more people are open to diversity and inclusion, the better. The notion of ‘other’ is very strong for a lot of people. We have to stop seeing people as ‘the other’. It could happen. It is a way of living. It is a learning process.”

— Ruth Farrugia, Children and Youngsters focus groups coordinator

¹⁵ Council of Europe (2016), *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies: A thematic report based on the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy*, p. 12, available at rm.coe.int/cultural-participation-and-inclusive-societies-a-thematic-report-based/1680711283

¹⁶ Council of Europe (2016), *Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy: Policy Maker’s Guidebook*, p. 16, available at culturalindicators.org/downloads/IFCD_Guidebook_v1_Oct2016.pdf

¹⁷ Roma Capitale and UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) — Culture Committee (2020), *The 2020 Rome Charter: The right to participate fully and freely in cultural life is vital to our cities and communities*, p. 1, available at www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/2020_rc_eng_0.pdf

Addressing cultural diversity

All the research stages — focus groups, interviews and knowledge-sharing working groups — have followed a common baseline of five interrelated features which the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) includes as necessary conditions for the full realisation of the right of everyone to take part in cultural life on the basis of **equality** and **without discrimination**.¹⁸

These include:



¹⁸ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General comment no. 21, Right of everyone to take part in cultural life (art. 15, para. 1 (a), of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 21 December 2009, E/C.12/GC/21, p. 4–5, available at www.refworld.org/docid/4ed35bae2.html

OUR DIVERSITY, OUR STRENGTH

Availability allows us to bring diverse cultural goods and services closer to the people in our communities, by making such goods and services open for everyone to enjoy and benefit.

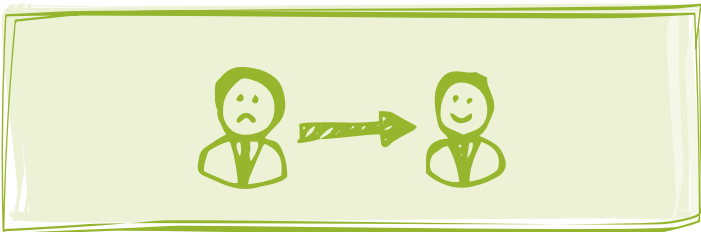


Accessibility guarantees that communities are aware of cultural opportunities so that we can enjoy them fully in an effective manner, within our physical, cognitive, financial and linguistic reach.

Acceptability ensures that cultural rights, strategies, policies and programmes are implemented in such a way as to be acceptable to us communities, while guaranteeing full tolerance of diverse expressions and needs.

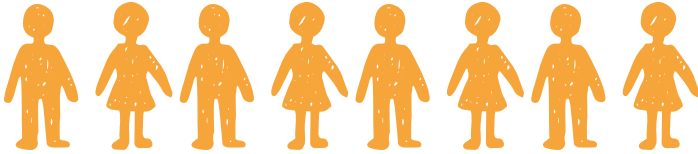


Adaptability refers to the flexibility of cultural strategies, policies and programmes that adapt to our needs while also challenging our perceptions; understanding our past and present while allowing them to evolve towards the future.



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Appropriateness consists of the realisation of cultural rights in a way that is suitable, inclusive and respectful of us communities and our context, on the basis of equity and without discrimination, while guaranteeing the other human rights.



The above descriptors immediately make us realise the interrelatedness and interdependence of these five conditions. Catering for one feature does not eliminate the need for the other. This reflects the overlaps that have emerged in the needs and recommendations of the different communities represented by the eight focus groups. Indeed, these five conditions are addressed as one set and continue to form our baseline as we strengthen our practice, in the pages that follow.

4. STRENGTHENING OUR PRACTICE

The keywords that follow through the next pages are all **action verbs** and act as a **reminder of how we continue to strengthen our practice**. These reflect the recommendations that have emerged from the research process. Some issues and recommendations overlap and feed into each other. This is simply due to the fact that life and human experience form part of a complex reality of multiple intersections and, thus, issues are not exclusive to one characteristic, need or group.

Each of these keywords can act as a standalone reminder which we can refer to from time to time, but following a cyclical progression can create a more bottom-up people-centred approach.

EXPLORE

our communities
and context

EMBRACE

our diversities

CLARIFY

our intentions

CONNECT

through different
communication channels

ENGAGE

through participation
and co-creation

COLLABORATE

to share our skills and
responsibilities

INVEST

our time in the
experience

LISTEN

with all
our senses

RECORD

our process

RESHAPE

as needs arise

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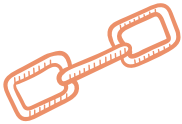
Explore



Embrace



Clarify



Connect



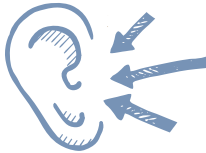
Engage



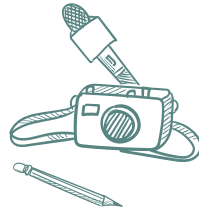
Collaborate



Invest



Listen



Record



Reshape

4A. EXPLORE

Exploring and discovering where we are working and who we are working with allows us to plan together better. We create because we seek to connect and interact with our communities and audiences. Before planning and creating something, we need to make sure to have a potential audience, and this requires some brainstorming and research.

Recommendation 1

Knowing our communities

Defining our target group helps us to identify and address the needs, abilities, preferences, desires and concerns of the people we work with. Our ideas can remain relevant if we adapt and plan what we have to offer accordingly. This does not mean that our ideas might not interest other people. We are just making sure that they address the needs of the immediate participants, collaborators and audiences.

Our communities can form part of an already existing group, or they can group up temporarily and specifically for the creative and collective experience. Having this background knowledge can help facilitate group dynamics.

Once this is sorted, we must always ensure that **everyone is ethically involved and seek the necessary consent.**

At times, getting to know our communities becomes more straightforward when we are out in the field.

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"Get to know your audience, their problems, how they think, how they feel and how best to reach out to them."

— Oliver Scicluna, then
Commissioner for the Rights of
Persons with disability

"It is indeed important for curators to go into the community, because it makes it easier for the elderly to participate. Cultural providers need to reach out."

— Older adults focus
group participant

Cultural producers need to be totally aware of who they are addressing — and avoid diving blindly into an event."

— Elton Micallef,
Malta Crafts Foundation

"Find ways to get the dialogue going. Go to places where people create that dialogue. This is very similar to engaging in small talk at a bus stop. Create situations for dialogue."

— People from different ethnic
backgrounds focus group participant

Recommendation 2

Knowing our context

We do not live in a vacuum. Communities bring along a wider context — a physical, social and political context that has its specific needs and challenges, which can never be ignored. Understanding the particular circumstances that a context is going through is crucial to ensuring a sustainable practice. Let us also be respectful of the environment around us and adopt fair and eco-friendly measures.



Recommendation 3

Identifying community mediators

At times it is worth considering the involvement of middle persons who can act as community mediators in helping identify a community, getting to know the people, as well as becoming familiar with the context. These could be individuals or already existing groups — like local councils, community groups, voluntary organisations, non-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations or similar — who have knowledge of the said community and context, either because they live there, work there or have some form of experience.

“Collaborating with mediators could give advice on how to reach groups of people that risk to be invisible.”

— Neil Falzon, Head of Secretariat, PHROM

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Ġnien Naqra Qatra Ecological Reading Garden (Malta, 2017)

Organised by the NGO Friends of the Earth and Maria Regina College, Mosta Primary A School — Kindergarten Annexe — in collaboration with the Local Council of Mosta, the aim of *Ġnien Naqra Qatra* was to involve all stakeholders in Mosta in a community gardening initiative, using creative methods to learn about nature and food production. The children were involved in artistic workshops that explored the natural world in an alternative way, and teachers were provided with ideas on how to utilise the community edible garden and reading area for learning opportunities. The ultimate goal for the garden was to create a multisensory area where all community members could visit and experience nature through all the senses.

www.foemalta.org/projects/gnien-naqra-qatra/

community gardening — food production — multisensory — interdisciplinary — collaboration

Photo credit by Glen Slattery





inVisible (Tokyo, 2015–present)

Through ongoing engagement with art projects, and in the belief that art is in everyone every day, inVisible aspires to bring about small changes that reshape our society while accommodating individual differences. inVisible offers creative space by developing projects and giving expert consultation for community development, creative placemaking, education and other social challenges. Art is not a mere object to be appreciated or experienced, but a medium, a platform, to connect the otherwise disconnected, to expand the horizon of our imagination, to offer an alternative perspective and the possibility to think, do and be; thus, to render the invisible visible.

www.invisible.tokyo

**placemaking — engagement — storytelling — everyday life —
sense of humour**

Tsumuki Project – Weaving Voices (2018); photo by Shinya Kogure



TIP

Getting to know our communities and context helps us develop deeper relationships with existing audiences and attract new audiences.

Brainstorm

Who do we wish to speak to?

Is it a small or a large community?

How old are the community members?

Where do they live?

What spaces do they frequent?

What do they read and watch?

Are there any new members?

Are there any current social, environmental or political concerns?

4B. EMBRACE

Embracing our diversities can enrich our experiences. Our communities are composed of a diversity of individuals of a different age, gender, ethnicity, ability, means, story and background. We all have our own different realities which present different needs and concerns. Adopting diversity as our guideline and common thread in all our practice can help us counter stereotypical representations and boost empathy.

Recommendation 1

When and where does it take place?

Choosing the appropriate time and venue when and where to hold our cultural events can make our encounters more accessible. This requires some reasonable accommodation, that is, adjusting and adapting our formats to make our context fair and equitable for the needs of both the audience and cultural practitioners alike.

Decentralising cultural activities by taking art and culture to the community, encouraging the use of spaces within the community, and distributing programming across different timings can overcome barriers that we encounter when we do not have personal transportation, rely on public transport, do not afford a taxi, and/or have different time constraints.

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Information on transportation — such as bus schedules, bus stops and reserved parking bays — provided in advance, and, where possible, organising specific transport for our activities can improve accessibility.

We might have other family responsibilities, such as tending to our young children. Providing childminding services can help reach a better compromise and increase participation.

The infrastructure of a venue is another aspect that needs to be addressed. Installation and maintenance of ramps, lifts, flexible seating arrangements, accessible signage, an even distribution of light, accessible restrooms, sensory spaces, evacuation plans for emergencies, and allowing service animals can facilitate our mobility experience. These accessible accommodations benefit a wide range of people with varying mobilities, including, but not limited to, people using a cane or a wheelchair, pushing strollers and prams, carrying children, or heavy bags.

Other examples of reasonable accommodation include directing audiences to specific members of staff for any requirements, content and trigger warnings, food and dietary restrictions, and touch tours that increase tactile engagement.

"If you live in the South, you need to take public transport and the theatre starts at 9pm, then you will never get back home by bus, so you don't go. One cannot expect that people would take a taxi."

— People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant



"The traditional expressions/culture often create barriers for people with disability. E.g. cultural heritage sites say that things cannot change because the site is 'x' years old, but in fact you can be creative and change things in such a way that it respects the site and it is still accessible to everyone."

— Amy Camilleri Zahra,
People with disabilities
focus group coordinator

"Use the village theatres for the respective villages and villagers. We need to rethink our spaces — local council halls, band clubs, school space ..."

— Hardly-reached focus
group participant

"Physical obstacles (particularly for the elderly with mobility issues, but also for young adults without personal transportation) can be overcome by taking art into the community."

— Désirée Attard,
Human Rights Directorate

Recommendation 2

Considering our economic means

Our financial means could also be a factor that hinder our cultural participation and expression. Many cultural activities are non-profit and rely on ticket sales to fund production and programming costs. Following alternative business models that allow for more equitable admission policies, such as flexible and scaled ticket-prices that the attendees can select based on their needs, can make our cultural activities more affordable.

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Our financial abilities form part of a wider picture. We need to cater for basic needs, such as food and shelter, which might take first priority. Furthermore, costs are not just socio-economic. It is not only a matter of paying a certain price to attend an event, but also about relevance.

Let us also address the struggles that artists and cultural producers meet to make a sustainable living out of their art. Supporting and promoting co-working spaces as affordable venues, lobbying with legislators for a systematic cross-sectoral change, providing sustainable housing, raising the minimum wage, implementing work-life balance measures, and fighting gentrification are some examples to help alleviate financial stress.

"Money is always an issue for young people. Lower the price, rather than giving a higher stipend."

— Youth focus group participant

"See that discounts become standard everywhere. Finances are an issue for most of the elderly."

— Older adults focus group participant

"Getting a VAT number is a huge barrier for us seeking asylum. I don't have a VAT number, so I cannot work. It's complicated."

— Hardly-reached focus group participant

Artists struggle to make a sustainable living out of their art in Malta, and for many, the arts are far from top priority when it comes to budgeting and spending their hard-earned money."

— Désirée Attard,
Human Rights Directorate



Events which can be live streamed, for instance, could attract individuals with mobility issues, or issues with social interactions for extended periods of time."

— Désirée Attard, Human Rights Directorate

"My grandmother would not take part if the activity involves new technology. One should think about the needs of the group."

— Dominik Kalweit, People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group coordinator

Recommendation 3

Considering our digital and technological means

In just a few months, the COVID-19 global pandemic has revealed how digital and technological resources can support cultural participation and expression. Live streaming and technology can address a wide array of mobility issues. In doing so, we need to acknowledge that not everyone has access to technology or is equipped with the appropriate skills. Finding ways to provide such resources and helping community members, especially older adults, learn to use digital tools can open a new window of shared experiences.

Recommendation 4

Empowering gender identities and expressions

As with other spheres of public life, gender discrimination and inequality are also present in the cultural sector. Providing equal opportunities, resisting dominant views on gender, avoiding stereotypes and limitations on freedom of expression based on gender, overcoming sex-specific challenges related to accessing specialised technical and entrepreneurial training, and challenging patriarchal family and social roles can help us empower our individual gender identities and expressions.

As cultural producers we can ensure that we give equal prominence to different gender identities and expressions, while resisting a binary perspective. For instance, we encourage museums to collect and curate art by female and non-binary artists just as much as art by men. We invite television productions to challenge the 'male gaze'. We further encourage musical productions to celebrate female storytelling as much as male storytelling.

Guaranteeing that work environments are safe for all and free from harassment creates a healthier working relationship. Supporting work-life balance measures can alleviate the burden disproportionately placed on women. Providing adequate training programmes can further challenge gender stereotypes.



"Events should ensure that their spaces have gender-neutral restrooms, or if gendered, changing tables for infants should also be placed in men's restrooms."

— Désirée Attard,
Human Rights Directorate

"When it comes to gender, there is still work to be done. Why are pants associated with boys? Or why can't boys wear pink? There are still a lot of biased messages going on, even just through play at school."

— Hardly-reached
focus group participant

Recommendation 5

Fusing the old and the new

Embracing new developments does not mean discarding the traditional. Otherwise, we risk progress making certain cultural sectors obsolete. The 'old' and the 'new', the 'traditional' and the 'contemporary' can co-exist and support one another, and not replace one another. We understand where we come from to develop new experiences. Our cultural expression through the use of traditional forms can be modified and influenced by newer forms, and vice versa.

"There needs to be an understanding that, for some, the traditional is more important and, for some, it's all about the contemporary. It is about acceptance and appreciation."

— Dominik Kalweit,
People from different ethnic
backgrounds focus
group coordinator

"Progress is not about throwing away the traditional. Otherwise, it will be destructive and/or superficial, rather than beneficial for the cultural sector. Culture needs to evolve while keeping true to its nature. This can be seen very clearly in the artisanship sector."

— Elton Micallef,
Malta Crafts Foundation

Recommendation 6

Fusing different ethnicities

Our cultural identity embraces multiple realities that are influenced by diverse encounters — by meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds, and by visiting different places. Focusing on a diverse cultural programme that reflects this mix of cultures, and having a more visible public endorsement of different cultural expressions can assist better exposure and integration.

“It needs to be a programme approach which the main institutions endorse. E.g. having an entire month in Summer dedicated to other cultures — having an African theme, a South-East Asian theme etc. — through plays, performances, seminars, workshops, instead of one-off activities.”

— Neil Falzon,
Head of Secretariat, PHROM

“There should be a stronger focus on outreach within migrant, refugee and minority communities, including in reception and open centres, to provide individuals with opportunities in arts and culture.”

— Désirée Attard,
Human Rights Directorate



Recommendation 7

Reaching a balance

Our diversities require different adaptations. As we include and adapt to different community groups, let us be careful not to overemphasise that we risk excluding the same groups. It is also about reaching a balance. Events should be as inclusive as possible, but there can be times when it makes more sense to have activities catering for specific groups. On the other hand, it is also beneficial to sometimes have a mixed-communities approach between, for instance, two community groups — an intergenerational approach that collaborates both with older adults and young children can be a case in point.

Addressing different target groups requires different methods. A simple statement that, for instance, 'children are welcome' or that our event includes 'adult material', can help community members determine whether that event is accessible or not. Similarly, teenagers, young adults and older adults want to identify themselves with the cultural offerings presented to them.

"Community arts focusing on elderly are sometimes too patronising. Do not patronise the elderly. We are adults not children."

— Older adults focus group participant

"I fear to show up in public especially if disability is over-highlighted ... Do not put a person with a disability in a different place. Mix them within the audience present."

— People with disabilities focus group participant

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Gawgaw — A Panto in the Dark (Malta, 2018)

The Christmas Pantomime is the yearly tradition for many Maltese families; however, not many have stopped to ask the question about its accessibility. *Gawgaw — A Panto in the Dark*, by Teatru Malta and supported by ESPLORA Interactive Science Centre and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, targets precisely this question and offers the pantomime experience to an audience with visual impairment. The aim was to create a show where everyone in the audience — with or without visual impairment — would have the same experience, a performance in pitch darkness. Working with persons with visual impairment, a magical sensory pantomime was created around the Maltese mythical figure of the Gawgaw, a monstrous ghost that wanders about frightening people on Christmas eve.

teatrumalta.org.mt/events/pantomima-fid-dlam/

accessibility — dis/ability — magical — sensory — cross-sectoral

Photo by Darren Agius





The Mothership Project *(Ireland, 2013–present)*

The Mothership Project is a network of Irish parenting visual artists and art workers with the aim of supporting parenting artists in the development of their practice and to encourage arts organisations to make the art world a more inclusive place for artists with children. Since its initial stages, the project hosted various workshops and discussions about issues relating to the perception as an artist when a mother, part-time vs full-time working partner, visibility, time, precarity, quality of work, patriarchal art institutions, gallery openings and children, male artist parents, and motherhood vs parenthood.

www.themothershipproject.wordpress.com

parenting — labour — precarity — equality — alternative

The Mothership Project Satellite Publication Launch, 2018



TIP

These recommendations present practical and logistical reminders. In the longer term, these need to become a natural and obvious part of all the planning, organisation and creation in our practice.

Brainstorm

What types of accommodations do our community members need?

What other financial models can we consider?

Do our community members use digital tools?
How can we help them?

Is our activity biased, in favour of one gender identity or expression?

What can we learn from more traditional/contemporary formats?

How can we collaborate with diverse ethnic cultures?

Is our practice patronising any community group?

4C. CLARIFY

Clarifying our intentions at the onset of a project, programme, workshop or event can create fertile ground for successful collaborations. Different community members might interpret the same message in different ways. So, departing with a common knowledge can overcome any potential misunderstandings that might crop up throughout the process.

Recommendation 1

Communicating clear objectives

Ensuring a clear purpose together with a set of clear objectives can facilitate the understanding of our practice and engage our communities better. Thus, such objectives are not solely important for planning, programming or seeking funds, but also for the community members to assess their relevance or otherwise. For this reason, objectives that are communicated in a carefully selected language and are straight to the point are better comprehended.

“Accessibility is not a perk or a benefit. It is not an over-and-above element; it is a normal standard.”

— Neil Falzon, Head of Secretariat, PHROM

“In order to access something, one must be aware of it, of its benefits, its objective and its relevance to one’s life.”

— Désirée Attard, Human Rights Directorate

Recommendation 2

Honesty is Key, respect is Key

Community members can bring new questions which might need further clarification. Providing space and time for a Q&A session at the initial stages of the creative process can clarify such queries. In answering these questions, honesty is key and it is totally fine if at the time of questioning we do not have an answer yet. That fact can also be communicated. It is neither a sign of neglect, nor unpreparedness. This could reveal the needs and desires of the community members, and can help us refine our plans. Most importantly, it is best not to promise what we might not be able to support.

Presenting our objectives in a sensitive manner can help maintain an open and horizontal approach.

"Nobody likes to be patronised. It is the way you address someone. If you say, 'I have something and I will show you how to do it' is different than 'I know something nice that I want to share with you and see what you think about it ...' The latter puts a completely different spin on it, it invites and does not patronise."

— Ruth Farrugia, Children and Youngsters
focus groups coordinator



TIP

objectives can become more inclusive and accessible when developed in collaboration with our community groups.

Brainstorm

What are the objectives of our practice?

What would we like to achieve?

How can the community groups benefit?

What results would we like to see in the longer term?

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Rakkont Ғaj (Malta, 2017)

A group of youths forming part of Kummissjoni WEB at the Society of St Mary and King George V Band Club of the village Mqabba, documented the local memory, history, as well as events that happened in the past by interviewing a number of elderly people. Particular emphasis was given to traditional games, the stone quarry industry, fireworks and the organisation of the community feasts which are synonymous with the village, hardship during World War II and pastimes from the past. The aim was to strengthen and increase awareness of the tangible and intangible local heritage. The youths were responsible for interviewing, video documenting and editing. The final series of video clips is presented through an online playlist.

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ00aJfq3uFZX0cSJ4ZqKT9SN8dWX9ixA

tradition — memory — narratives — local heritage — intergenerational

Kummissjoni WEB whilst interviewing a traditional local baker;
photo by Kummissjoni WEB





The Belonging Project (San Francisco Bay Area, 2018–2019)

Through workshops and open calls, artist Christine Wong Yap invited anyone with a meaningful connection to the San Francisco Bay Area to share their story of belonging, by referring to pivotal places, activities, communities and experiences that shape Bay Area residents' connectedness to the neighbourhood. Contributors shared the places where they feel or have felt a sense of belonging, and 25 places were commemorated with hand-lettered certificates installed in situ. Others shared how they carry a sense of belonging with them, and their responses inspired six hand-printed bandannas. Each story highlights certain qualities of belonging, such as autonomy, safety, meaning, self-worth and well-being. These stories are also collected and published in a book.

www.christinewongyap.com/work/2019/belonging-bay-area/

belonging — interconnectedness — acceptance — neighbourhood — participation

Belonging Certificate, 2019, installed on location at a bakery café in Oakland;
photos by Christine Wong Yap



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"Switching always to English has an impact on our traditions. We need to preserve the Maltese language."

— People active in traditional culture
focus group participant

"Language can also be a barrier. If an event is solely in Maltese it puts you off, because you cannot communicate."

— People from different ethnic
backgrounds focus group participant

"One should not assume that English is universally understood."

— Désirée Attard,
Human Rights Directorate

"More adequate accessibility, both physical and attitudinal, includes several languages, such as sign language and Braille signage."

— Local Government Division
representatives

4D. CONNECT

Connecting with one another is a basic human need. The imparting and exchanging of information make us feel part of a bigger and wider group — a community. We are all unique and we connect differently. We tend to use varied communication channels based on our different needs, means and preferences.

Recommendation 1

Choosing our language

Some people prefer to communicate in Maltese, while others prefer the English language. Let us keep in mind that, as a bilingual State, we have two official languages: Maltese and English. Moreover, in 2016, the Maltese Parliament recognised the Maltese Sign Language (LSM — Il-Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija) as an official language of Malta.¹⁹ Knowing which language to use and when, according to the target group's preference, facilitates our communication.

Linguistic reasonable accommodation creates a more equitable context for persons with disability. Together with sign language interpretation, we can also consider Braille, audio description and closed captioning.

¹⁹ More information can be accessed on the Deaf People Association's website, available at www.deafmalta.com/maltese-sign-language-lsm.html

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Making an effort to use these languages in a simultaneous manner, when possible, is always appreciated. This makes our communication tools (posters, invites, newsletters, brochures, flyers, videoclips, programmes, catalogues, booking forms, consent forms, websites and social media pages) more accessible and inclusive.

Recommendation 2

Choosing our communication channels

Information can be shared on different types of platforms and in different formats. In recent years, digital platforms have become ever more present. This does not necessarily replace other formats such as printed communication (e.g. newspapers, letters sent by post) or oral communication (e.g. radio and TV programmes, phone calls). Making the information available through different formats can reach a wider audience.

"Training programmes in product innovation, visual merchandising and marketing — including digital tools — are of utmost importance."

— Elton Micallef,
Malta Crafts Foundation

"If a target audience is sought, that audience's preferred source of information should be researched and used. All relevant information should be synced and consistent across all platforms: the organisation's website, social media accounts, email marketing, etc."

— Désirée Attard, Human Rights Directorate



Recommendation 3

Adapting our language

Information is best communicated when it is concise and straight to the point. Sharing a lot of information can be overwhelming, especially at an initial stage. Breaking it into smaller steps is more appealing. Adapting our language to the needs of the community members also means a careful selection of the terminology used.

"Language can be very interesting. You can use it very creatively. We need to communicate in a language that the target group is comfortable with."

— Dominik Kalweit,
People from different ethnic
backgrounds focus group coordinator

Recommendation 4

A picture is worth a thousand words

We do not just read words, we also read images. Sometimes it is easier to remember one image than a lot of written words. Selecting the appropriate image that reflects and conveys the message can lead to more effective communication. Written text can also appeal

"Use the 'easy-to-read' format: a few short sentences and an image."

— Amy Camilleri Zahra,
People with disabilities
focus group coordinator

better to our visual reading when we pay attention to selecting the appropriate font style, font size and line spacing.

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Laringa Mekkanika (Malta, 2019)

An in-your-face theatre for teens, by Teatru Malta and commissioned by Žigužajg International Arts Festival for Children & Young People, this production is laced with juvenile delinquency and youth gangs, in a near-dystopian future. *Laringa Mekkanika*, a Maltese adaptation by Wayne Flask of Anthony Burgess' classic novel *A Clockwork Orange*, presents us with strong and emotional teenage themes such as bullying, self-harm, drugs, violence, gender identities and other socio-political, economic issues that are still very relevant today.

teatrumalta.org.mt/events/laringa-mekkanika-ta-anthony-burgess/
www.ziguzajg.org/project/laringa-mekkanika/

Gen Z — emotional vulnerability — violence — empathy — adaptation

Photo by Lindsey Bahia



**Pidgin Tongue** (*Riga, 2018*)

Artist Stine Marie Jacobsen invited children in Riga to a two-week collaborative, multi-language and experimental writing workshop, where mother tongues were split, rewelded and transformed into new (step-) mother/pidgin tongues through translation of idioms, change of words and new laws. The children were invited to re-examine their relationship to both Latvian and Russian languages to create a dictionary for a new language. Through co-creation, the project created an environment where the children were free to interact and give meaning and shape to their dreams, fears and hopes while supporting their claim on a future for Latvian culture. The results of this project are shared in a book and a co-created interactive sculpture.

www.stinemarijacobsen.com/pidgin-tongue/

language — human rights — envisioning — play — co-creation

A double-page from the *Pidgin Tongue* book, designed by Modem Studio and published by Broken Dimanche Press.

Those are Lithuanian letters!

*Dude, they're not exactly
Lithuanian and not exactly
Russian!*

Where were you born?

*Well, I wasn't born in Lithuania,
but my grandmother is there,
so I have roots in Lithuania.*

I can't see them.

*They're invisible, actually
they're small.
I have 'rootlings' there!*



TIP

Communication is a two-way process. The sender and the receiver are not on opposing ends, but can feed information to one another.

"Knowing the language increases a sense of belonging. When you know the language, wherever you go, you are part of that culture."

— People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group participant

Brainstorm

Which language do our community members use/prefer?

Which communication channels do our community members use?

Are the community members present on any social media platforms?

Can the text be shortened or presented in more direct terms?

What image can best reflect our message?

Is the font legible by all?

4E. ENGAGE

Engaging with community members has been widely discussed in the past 50 years of art and culture making. However, there is not one common understanding. This has also created confusion in the terms we use, which we often use interchangeably. These include 'participatory art', 'socially-engaged practice', 'community art' and 'co-creation', to name just a few.

For the sake of clarity, as we make our way through this handbook, we can refer to the distinction that community artist, François Matarasso, makes between 'participatory art' and 'community art'. In his latest book *A Restless Art — How participation won and why it matters* (2019), he explains that the term 'participatory art' refers to people being invited to join in a pre-defined experience. On the other hand, 'community art' is a shared and collective experience where people come together to discuss objectives and the way forward; thus, there are no pre-defined end results. Although the difference is rather subtle, different methodologies require different relationships with communities, whereby in 'community art' people co-operate and co-create as equals.

We can explore different methodologies and layers of engagement processes, and different practitioners and theorists give us different models. Keeping in mind Matarasso's distinction, we can recognise some similarities in the following four layers of participation,

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put forward by visual and performance artist and educator, Pablo Helguera, in his book *Education for Socially Engaged Art — A materials and techniques handbook* (2011).

“Engage, think inclusively, create a context for personal experiences and see that others can express themselves in such a context.”

— People from different ethnic backgrounds
Focus group participant

Recommendation 1

Nominal participation

As community members we reflect on the artistic and cultural work as spectators, maintaining a passive and detached attitude. Examples could include visiting an exhibition or watching a theatrical piece. The fact that the artform makes us reflect is a form of participation in itself, but we are not involved in the planning and creative process. This often entails a one-off, single encounter.



Recommendation 2

Directed participation

As community members we are invited to complete a basic activity which contributes to the creation of a wider and larger work, following a series of given instructions. An example could be: leaving our message written on a sticky note in relation to a specific theme. This also often involves a single encounter.

"We also want to be on stage, not just be in the audience."

— People with disabilities
focus group participant

Recommendation 3

Creative participation

As community members we actually contribute to the work by providing content for the creation of the work or part of it, as pre-defined by the artist. An example could be the participation of a community band playing as part of a musical concert. This often entails a commitment over a longer period of time.

Recommendation 4

Collaborative participation

As community members we are involved in the design and development of the creative practice. So, we are sharing responsibility for defining objectives, decision-making, planning and organising the way forward, as well as creating content for the work. We are all co-creators; thus, we are equals, similar to how Matarasso defines 'community art'. This requires us to commit for a longer period of time, from months to years.

"Visiting a museum and making it accessible to people with a disability is good, but [to] go a step further and have them curate the exhibition with you is better. Make them part of the organising committee."

— Amy Camilleri Zahra, People with disabilities focus group coordinator



“Move away from having performances, events etc., about themes, but try to involve the people as active players in the activity itself.”

— Neil Falzon, Head of Secretariat, PHROM

“The best way of ensuring that the message is delivered is to actually have members of the target audience on board during the creation process. If, for instance, a theatre performance seeks to target teenagers, consider having a preliminary screening for a focus group of teenagers (Gen Z). Ask them to give honest feedback.”

— Désirée Attard, Human Rights Directorate

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Opening Doors Association *(Malta, 2008–present)*

Opening Doors Association is a non-governmental voluntary arts organisation that provides opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities in the artistic sector. Its various groups meet weekly for performing arts training, namely in theatre, dance and music. Opening Doors also produces performances and organises Open-Air Jams, with the performers developing creative work together with the artistic team. It is a person with disability's right to have access to the arts and to artistic expression and Opening Doors makes it its mission to promote and realise this.

www.openingdoors.org.mt

accessibility — dis/ability — creative process — artistic training — co-creation





SUPERTRAMPS *(Vienna, 2015–present)*

SUPERTRAMPS is a social enterprise working with (formerly) homeless people who share their individual experiences with dignity, autonomy and self-determination. Through 90-minute walking tours through the city of Vienna, each SUPERTRAMPS guide leads the people to a different and hidden side of the city, off the beaten track. The guides highlight specific landmarks of personal and symbolic meaning. At carefully chosen places, they connect knowledge about homelessness with their personal stories. Anecdotes, surprising facts, discussion, typical Viennese life, philosophy, dreams and a dash of humour are the ingredients of these walks.

www.supertramps.at

homelessness — walking — city — new perspectives — storytelling

Photo by Reinard Nadrchal





TIP

One method of engagement is not necessarily better than the other. The needs and desires of our communities can help us determine the appropriate method.

Brainstorm

What do our communities request?

What are our intentions?

How much time do we have available?

What type of spaces and venues can we utilise?

What resources do we have available?

4F. COLLABORATE

Collaborating with others allows us to work together to create, produce or achieve the same goals and objectives. When we work collaboratively, we can address and interact with a wider audience, access greater resources and create a better impact. Successful collaborations require a sharing of roles and responsibilities whereby each expertise — be it academic, social, community-based, experiential, organisational — is equally important.

Recommendation 1

Exchanging our skills

We all excel in different fields and sectors, based on our experience, study and profession. These differences in our knowledge do not indicate any form of superior or inferior intelligence. On the contrary, exchanging our skills facilitates a more holistic practice, whereby infinite directions — which can be divergent, yet complementing — provide multiple perspectives to deal with the same issue, theme or concept and/or solve a problem.

"Encourage collaboration ... this will be the drive for innovation ... The amalgamation of each other's skills supports [all involved]. However, this needs mutual respect and trust. Nobody can think everything. Others need you as much as you need them."

— Elton Micallef, Malta Crafts Foundation

Recommendation 2

Teaming up

Adopting a broad horizontal and cross-sectoral approach by teaming up with different partners, including different institutions, organisations, government departments and individual professionals from different fields, can help us ensure an equitable access to cultural life. This needs to be a shared responsibility and not held exclusively by one entity.



"Involve more different organisations and connections with different departments."

— Hardly-Reached focus group participant

"International cultural relations are encouraged."

— Elton Micallef, Malta Crafts Foundation

"Local Councils play an important role in the preservation and the provision of information about the locality's cultural heritage."

— Local Government Division representatives

"The need to move away from a product delivery perspective and try to see again through partnerships ... needs to be instilled from a very young age."

— Neil Falzon, Head of Secretariat, PHROM

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ChaChaChakra (Malta, 2019–2020)

ChaChaChakra is a cross-sectoral effort by four diverse Maltese institutions — Kopin, Żugraga Dance, the Prison Education and Re-Entry Platform of the University of Malta, and the Centre of Residential Restorative Services (CoRRS) within the Correctional Services Agency — to provide juvenile inmates residing at CoRRS with an opportunity to engage in movement workshops. The workshops focus on dance whilst incorporating elements of yoga. The aim is to help participants gain a sense of self-worth and foster self-awareness. The creative and meditative practice of the project allows the participants to engage in a deeply healing process, guiding them towards new and profound ways of expressing their feelings of rage, frustration, alienation and confusion of current and past situations.

www.kopin.org/portfolio-items/chachachakra/

youth — well-being — teamwork — integration — cross-sectoral

Movement class with youth inmates at CoRRS, and facilitated by Żugraga Dance; photo by Mark Chetcuti for Kopin





connect2abilities (*Australia & South Korea, 2019–present*)

The *connect2abilities* project has inclusion and the involvement of people with disabilities at its heart. By ‘connecting people to people’ through creative and artistic expression, the project aims to kick-start dialogue between Australia and South Korea. The intention is to build understanding between disability arts workers and artists in both countries and to pave the way for future collaborations and long-term partnerships. The project provides a platform that fosters cultural engagement and collaboration through a series of symposia and workshops for artists, both with and without disabilities, presenters, academics and policymakers.

www.connect2abilities.com

dis/ability — intercultural — partnership — inclusion — connectedness

Restless Dance Theatre — *Intimate Space*, 2017; photo by Shane Reid



TIP

Recognising different forms of expertise is the first step towards successful collaborations.

Brainstorm

What is our expertise?

What skills do we miss?

Who can share these missing skills?

Which other partners can contribute?

4G. INVEST

Investing our time and effort means that we spend a lot of energy on doing something. Working with our communities is a process, and achieving the goals together as one team requires time. **Different goals and different communities require different time frames.** It is a commitment which leads us to a more efficient practice, that can increase the value of its impact.

Recommendation 1

Building trust

Finding the right collaborators and **recruiting community members** who are willing to engage in the practice takes time, at times longer than we imagine. Reasons for this can vary depending on the community and the context. As in all relationships in life, getting to know each other takes time. Moreover, during development and implementation stages, unforeseen circumstances do crop up, such as personal commitments — of any team or community member, group dynamics, not finding the appropriate resources or venues, or not having the ideal weather, to name just a few.

Investing our time to build trust in one another allows our relationships and practice to unfold smoothly.

Recommendation 2

Experiencing the process

We often find ourselves thinking and putting our focus on the end result of our cultural practice — be it an exhibition, a film, a concert, a story, a play, a song, a festival or similar. This can make us rush through the process. Possibly we are also influenced by the system around us, that often poses restricted timeframes and also expresses itself in terms of ‘product’. However, not every form of artistic and cultural practice requires an end result in the strict sense of the term. The process in itself could be the focus and result of our practice.

“It is of utmost importance for cultural entities and organisations to invest their time and energy into their practice and raise their ambitions.”

— Elton Micallef, Malta Crafts Foundation



TIP

Planning realistic goals requires us to consider the time we are willing to invest.

Brainstorm

How much time are we ready to invest?

Do we know our communities well?

What can we do to improve our relationship?

What is our focus?

RIGHT TO CULTURE

Deep Shelter Project (Malta, 2015–2018)

The framework of *Deep Shelter Project*, by Pamela Baldacchino, focuses on reflection, relation and revelation (of meaning). This allows one to analyse the experience of illness, hospitalisation and care, as well as, relate this to the visual art process within a hospital setting. Based on the use of visuals, nature is the central dynamic that brings together the interplay of different elements. This aims to trigger a feeling of being at home, where one is understood and sheltered. The works created encourage the process of narration on the patient's part whilst acknowledging all that cannot be explained. The project also exposes art to new audiences, expanding and increasing society's engagement with art content.

www.valletta2018.org/cultural-programme/deep-shelter-project/

**therapeutic environments — hospitalisation — oncology —
connectedness — sensory**

Artwork by Pamela Baldacchino and Sara Pace, hanging in the day ward, 2018; photo by Pamela Baldacchino





Project Row Houses (*Houston, 1993–present*)

Project Row Houses (PRH) is a community platform that enriches lives through art with an emphasis on cultural identity and its impact on the urban landscape. Artist and founder Rick Lowe, together with other collaborating artists, had recognised potential in a series of derelict shotgun houses in the Third Ward neighbourhood — one of the city's oldest African-American neighbourhoods. They began exploring how art could be an engine for social transformation. The platform now engages neighbours, artists and enterprises in collective creative action to help materialise sustainable opportunities in marginalised communities.

projectrowhouses.org

**housing — neighbourhood — social transformation — collective action
— sustainability**

Photo by Peter Molick



RIGHT TO CULTURE

"I think young people need to be consulted about how space is used. Some spaces are publicly not accessible. Here, consultancy is useful."

— Youngsters focus group participant

"Audiences can be engaged by sharing the experience in dialogue or actively in the process."

— Elton Micallef,
Malta Crafts Foundation

"When you try to speak, they stop you."

— Youngsters focus group participant

"Storytelling is more open and accessible."

— Hardly-reached focus group participant

4H. LISTEN

Active listening helps us build that trust required for a successful relationship with our communities and collaborators. As the name suggests, listening in an active manner requires our full concentration and interest in what is being said and who is saying it. It is much more than passively hearing, it is more than listening with our ears; it is listening with our eyes, with our body, with our brain and with our heart, through verbal and non-verbal messages.

Recommendation 1

Maintaining an open dialogue

As we have seen in other chapters, art and culture-making is an ongoing process that invites us to engage in an ongoing conversation — a dialogue. Our dialogue is open and critical when we receive and give constant feedback that allows our practice to continue growing and evolving. This makes us move closer to our communities, who in turn feel free and more at ease to share ideas, thoughts, needs, desires and stories in a more open and honest manner.

"When going to the museum with your teacher, the teacher decides what we are going to see. If you want to see something else, that is not possible. Then, you have to convince your parents to go back so you can see what you want to see."

— Children focus group participant

"Feedback collected from audiences should be balanced with what the organisation has set out to achieve."

— Elton Micallef,
Malta Crafts Foundation

Recommendation 2

Keeping track

Active listening and exchanging constant feedback help us keep track of the process. It helps us understand if plans are working well, if objectives are being reached, and if the message is being well-conveyed. Listening to our communities can also highlight any issues that need to be revised, such as revising our intentions and methodologies. This reciprocity supports our practice and secures its relevance for our communities. At times this might require us to negotiate and reach a balance between the needs of the communities and those of the cultural practice, so as to secure mutual gain. We can achieve this through active listening.



TIP

Let's continue listening to ensure that we address all the needs of our communities.

Brainstorm

Are we paying attention?

How can we avoid judgement?

What is our body language saying?

Are we rushing through the process?

How do we feel?

How do our communities feel?

RIGHT TO CULTURE

Grey Pride — A Look at the Lives of the Older LGBTIQ Community in Malta (Malta, 2015)

After two decades of LGBTIQ rights activism, which resulted in significant social, cultural and legal transformation, the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) sought to collate the stories of the older generation who remember a very different time when such progress could scarcely have been imagined. These stories are compiled in a publication that presents the experiences that have shaped the lives of the senior members of the LGBTIQ community, their current realities as well as their expectations for their future as they advance in age.

www.maltgayrights.org/grey-pride-a-look-at-the-lives-of-the-older-lgbtiq-community-in-malta/

LGBTIQ — elderly — narratives — solidarity — activism

Publication cover — designed and illustrated by Nadine Noko





Pizza Shop Heroes (London, 2018)

The touring production *Pizza Shop Heroes* is a play by Phosphoros Theatre, a charity that makes socially engaged performances with, for and by refugees and people seeking asylum. The play stars four refugee young men who travelled to the UK on their own as children from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Albania. Seeking asylum, they repeatedly told their stories to the Home Office, and the desire to reclaim these is what grounds the play. From the precinct of a pizza shop, we embark on a journey across time and continents to explore how the four young men reached the UK, where they're going and what they've learnt along the way.

www.phosphorstheatre.com/pizza-shop-heroes

people on the move — refugees — borders — storytelling — co-creation

Photo by David Monteith-Hodge



RIGHT TO CULTURE

“Including training programmes in the use of new methods and tools to keep up with today’s pace is of utmost importance.”

— Elton Micallef, Malta Crafts Foundation

4I. RECORD

Recording and documenting special and significant moments in our life is a habit that most of us are accustomed to. This allows us to relive those special moments at a later stage and share them with a wider group of people. We all have our preferred methods and modes of documentation — be it taking a photo, filming a video clip, or keeping a journal. Keeping a record of what we do is also important in art and culture making.

Recommendation 1

Choosing our modes of documentation

Different activities require different modes of documentation and we can choose the appropriate one from a wide variety of tools: photography, videography, voice and audio recording, note-taking, written descriptions and drawing visuals. We select the appropriate mode of documentation by discussing with our collaborators and considering the needs and preferences of our communities. Each different mode provides its own advantages and suggests a different reading. So, using more than one mode of documentation allows us to have multiple readings of the same experience. Equipping ourselves and our team members with the right skills in using the necessary

documentation tools could be part of the creative process itself. Moreover, **we start documenting the process only after the communities provide their consent.**

Recommendation 2

Why we document

Documenting our practice gives us the possibility to revisit, reflect and narrate our experience and, thus, to share it with a wider audience as part of the legacy plan. This could include sharing it with other communities, institutions, organisations, the media, publishing houses and future sponsors or funding bodies. Certain cultural activities specific to a particular community, time and context, and that are constructed on elements of temporary experience and togetherness, cannot simply travel from one venue to another or adjust easily to other situations. In such cases, documentation becomes a very beneficial tool, as long as we recognise that this is not a replacement for our action and experience.



TIP

We record to acknowledge, celebrate and share.

Brainstorm

Do our communities provide consent to be photographed or filmed?

Do our communities understand where and how their images may be used?

Are they feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the people documenting?

How can we make our documentation more interesting?

Why are we documenting, as an add-on or as part of the creative process?

RIGHT TO CULTURE

Burning Bikinis — Bikinis, Society, Women (Malta, 2017)

An aditus foundation film directed by Alessandro Tesei and Emmanuel Tut-Rah Farah in collaboration with Subwaylab, *Burning Bikinis* takes its cue from the introduction of the bikini into Maltese seaside culture in the early to mid-60s, and the social and religious furore that surrounded it. This film explores feminism in Malta from a historical perspective by looking at events that happened in Malta, through talking to those who lived it and adopting an introspective voice by inviting Malta to reflect on today's role of women in the community.

www.aditus.org.mt/our-work/projects/burning-bikinis/

women's rights — gender roles — narratives — collective memory — socio-religious perspective

Behind the scenes at the National Archives of Malta, Rabat, 2016; photo by Emmanuel Tut Rah-Farah, Alessandro Tesei





Isola Art Center (Milan, 2001–present)

Isola Art Center is an open and experimental platform working in the social field of urban conflict by combining the dynamics of contemporary art with the needs and desires of the inhabitants of the Isola district, a former industrial and working-class neighbourhood. Initiated by artist Bert Theis and other artists in the neighbourhood, it firmly aligned itself with the struggles of the inhabitants against the rather violent top-down urban planning and gentrification. The area has been transformed into a luxury district, eradicating the memory of the past. Despite the lost battle, the neighbourhood associations and the inhabitants continued to lobby for a new self-organised community cultural space, including the community garden Isola Pepe Verde — an ongoing little Utopia.

www.isolartcenter.org/en/ | www.isolapepeverde.org

urban transformation — collective memory — self-organisation — green space — activism

Collective portrait, curated by Edna Gee and Isola Art Center, 2014; photo by Paola Di Bello



RIGHT TO CULTURE

"Community practice needs a lot of flexibility. Funding systems need to adapt to that."

— Dominik Kalweit, People from different ethnic backgrounds focus group coordinator

"There is not enough flexibility, and I see that there is a lot of fear of the 'other'. There is no one-size-fits-all approach."

— Hardly-reached focus group participant

"Cultural life has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of various audiences within their diverse social and cultural settings. Only in this way can the creative sector have a sustainable future."

— Elton Micallef, Malta Crafts Foundation

4J. RESHAPE

Reshaping our thinking, our behaviour and our methods is essential, as the COVID-19 global pandemic demonstrated. At times, situations are beyond our control and, irrespective of their scale, we can only move forward when we are willing to change, adjust and reach a compromise.

Recommendation 1

Being flexible is an asset

The needs of our communities change; situations change too, and the reasons for this can vary. These changes can prove to be challenging as they can affect and transform our planning in countless ways; we might need to shift or lengthen our timelines, modify our objectives, or come up with new methodologies. The more practical we are, the more varied options we can offer. As cultural practitioners and organisations we regularly revisit our practice so as to rethink the type of experience we are offering.

RIGHT TO CULTURE

Dance Beyond Borders (*Malta, 2020–present*)

This project brings together contemporary dancer Julienne Schembri and flamenco dancer Deborah Falzon, with a practice-based research centring around how dance can be used as a vehicle to unite people. They explore how dance can exist on the continuum between art and activism in relation to displacement and integration. They aim to present dance performances that present stories about migration, to connect people from different backgrounds through community projects and to seek ways in which dance can be used as a vehicle to celebrate cultural diversity.

www.linktr.ee/dancebeyondborders

**dance activism — socially-engaged practice — cultural diversity —
integration — community**

Dance Beyond Borders in residency with ŻfinMalta for AiR2020; photo by Aaron Shah
Aristun Shah





Palestine Heirloom Seed Library (*Battir, 2014–present*)

Founded by artist Vivien Sansour, the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library seeks to preserve and promote ancient seed varieties, traditional Palestinian farming practices, and the stories, knowledge and memories associated with them, threatened by agribusiness, corporate seed, land dominance and political violence. The Library and the associated El Beir Arts and Seeds Center symbolise the core belief that agriculture comprises both 'agri' (traditional farming practices) + 'culture' (the associated lifestyle/livelihood traditions essential to a community's identity). This also serves as a space for collaborations with artists, poets, writers, journalists and other members to share their work. Working closely with farmers, Sansour identified key seed varieties and food crops to actively preserve their bioculture and recuperate their local landscape.

www.viviensansour.com/Palestine-Heirloom

**alternative economies — rural politics — agrobiodiversity — tradition
— exchange**

Photo by Samar Hazboun



TIP

Something that does not evolve becomes a fossil.

Brainstorm

Is our cultural practice available to all?

Is our cultural practice accessible to all?

Is our cultural practice acceptable to all?

Is our cultural practice adapting for all?

Is our cultural practice appropriate for all?

A FINAL RECOMMENDATION

We hope that this resource pack continues to prove the core and essential value that cultural rights bring to our communities and societies on the basis of respect for human dignity. Culture brings people together, and it opens discussion. As the participants of the focus groups and the members of the cross-sectoral knowledge-building working group remark, there is a strong overlap between cultural rights and the educational field in terms of nurturing creative and critical thinking skills.

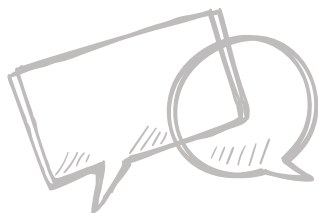
As a final recommendation, we can draw on Karima Bennoune's framework for action: **CULTURES**.

C stands for **consultation of all affected stakeholders** and their participation in making policies to protect cultural life and rights during and after the pandemic.

U is for the **urgency of the response** needed in terms of funding and support for artistic and cultural sectors and those who work in them, and for cultural rights defenders, and in the form of action to prevent artistic and cultural losses.

L is for **legal obligations**, a reminder that States are legally required by international human rights law to guarantee cultural rights for all during and after the pandemic.

CONSULTATION
OF ALL AFFECTED



URGENCY
OF THE
RESPONSE



UPPING THE
FUNDING
FOR CULTURE



RIGHTS-BASED
APPROACHES

LEGAL
OBLIGATIONS



EVERYONE



TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY



SOLIDARITY

RIGHT TO CULTURE

T is for **twenty-first century**, a reminder that the choices made now about defending cultural rights and the right to science during and after the pandemic will be defining how these rights are enjoyed for years to come, and whether they will be available to young people and future generations.

U is for **upping the funding for culture**, and avoiding budget cuts.

R is for **rights-based approaches**, and the necessity of considering the cultural rights of all in applying and making cultural policies, and supporting at-risk cultural rights defenders whose efforts are essential for guaranteeing these rights.

E stands for **everyone**, a reminder to focus on inclusion and combat discrimination in the enjoyment of cultural rights during the pandemic.

S represents **solidarity**, a core human rights value we need in order to guarantee cultural rights and the right to science, nationally and internationally, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰

²⁰Benboune, K. (2021), Covid-19, culture and cultural rights — Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, para. 77, p. 19-20, available at digitallibrary.un.org/record/3907050?ln=en

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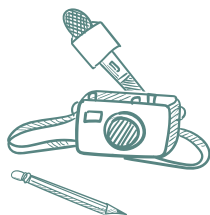
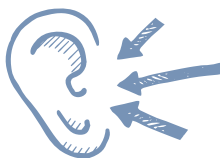
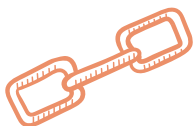
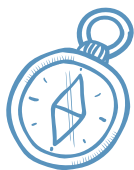
Further thanks go to the focus groups coordinators who, with sensitivity and care, managed to address the diverse characteristics of each group. These include: **Dr Ruth Farrugia**, Senior Lecturer (Civil Law) who coordinated the children and the youngsters groups; **Ms Maria C. Borg**, Senior Youth Worker at Aġenzija Żgħażaġh who coordinated the youth group; **Prof. Marvin Formosa**, Associate Professor (Gerontology and Dementia) who coordinated the older adults group; **Mr Michael Deguara**, Academic (Anthropology) who coordinated the hardly-reached group; **Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra**, Assistant Lecturer (Disability Studies) who coordinated the group of people with disabilities; **Mr Dominik Kalweit**, Vice Executive Director and Director for Projects and Initiatives at Kopin who coordinated the group of people from different ethnic backgrounds; and **Mr Pawlu Mizzi**, Artist and Graphic Designer who coordinated the group of people active in traditional culture.

RIGHT TO CULTURE

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