EUROPEAN CULTURAL
AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
INNOVATION POLICY PLATFORM

Cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM POLICY LAB 7

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1 Introduction

The seventh *ekip* Policy Lab explored the challenges in cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts and identifies (policy) actions needed to foster the role of performing arts in open innovation ecosystems in Europe. This report starts with a summarised identification of what is understood by cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts, followed by the key challenges and pathways for policy makers that we identified to stimulate an environment where cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts can thrive. The report is enriched with examples of policy initiatives and funded projects related to cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts.

To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts and formulate relevant policy recommendations, an extensive literature review was done by *ekip* researchers, as well as a policy lab organised in Lund in June 2025 with performing arts professionals, policymakers, key intermediaries, and researchers with expertise in the performing arts sector and open innovation ecosystems. The proposed policy recommendations in this document build on these inputs are reviewed during an online community review session in September 2025, after which they are refined and finalised.

Good practice of cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts

Throughout the report, you will find these boxes that describe good examples of cross-sectoral innovation involving the performing arts. These examples can help to make the topic of cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts more understandable and specific and also serve to inspire the reader.

2 Cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts: definition and scope

Cross-sectoral innovation can be described as open knowledge transfer and creative combination of innovation methods aimed at developing novel products services, processes and social innovations[1]. The key element characterizing cross-sectoral innovation is the transfer of knowledge and solutions - processes that are further categorised as inside-out, outside-in, and related approaches - to distinguish different flows of innovation. **Innovations that emerge from exchange between two, or more, fields of different activities** are often connected further with the notions of spillover and crossover effects.

In the context of CCIs, spillover effects would refer to a process where the influence and impact yielding from the CCI sector transfers to other sectors through applications of ideas, skills, knowledge, and concepts. While spillover effects would describe more accidental and unintended outcomes, the notion of crossover effects refers to deliberate and intentional processes that channel knowledge and skills from the CCIs to interlink with those from other sectors to generate innovation.

The joint field of performing arts and innovation raises the expectation that such dialogue and crossover will inspire the development of the intersection between artistic exploration/expression and scientific research and technology, merging creativity with research and technology for innovation.

There is evidence of the added value of performing **arts practices and methodologies in cross-innovation** processes. Specifically, we talk about the added value of **embodied practices and experiential situations**, for example in prototyping, forecasting, trending, fostering engagement in uncertain and volatile times.

[1] Kompetenzzentrum Kultur- und Kreativwirkschaft

Across Europe, we encounter diverse types of cross-innovation projects with performing arts: collaborations between individual artists, companies, and festivals with universities and research centres; partnerships with hospitals and healthcare professionals; joint initiatives with schools and training institutions; and experimental work with businesses, technology firms, or civil society actors. Some of these remain largely within research labs or residencies, where networks and methods are nurtured behind the scenes. Others take public shape through performances, exhibitions, installations, conferences, and dedicated programme lines in cultural venues.

TECHNO-UTOPIA

This project is a pioneering example of how performing arts can shape the future of technology through ethical, localised innovation. In this project, composer Robert Laidlow collaborates with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra to embed expressive AI instruments into live orchestral performance. What sets this project apart is its commitment to data ethics: the AI tools used are trained exclusively on recordings owned and shared by the orchestra itself. This approach challenges the dominant narrative that AI development must rely on scraping vast amounts of online content, often without the creators' consent.

Read more via this link.

Potential outcomes of involving performing arts actors in open innovation ecosystems can be categorised in three different areas:

- **Innovation of performing arts:** pooling external knowledge to innovate performing arts practices both on - and off-stage.
- **Creating intersections:** developing conditions for meaningful intersections between (performing) arts and innovation.
- **Innovation through performing arts:** Performing arts drive or disseminate innovations in other societal domains.

Innovation within the performing arts sector itself often results in new experiences and insights, new ways of engagement with audiences or more ecological and social sustainability practices. Developing meaningful intersections between the performing arts and other sectors to drive innovation leads to the development of cross-sectorial networks and exchange of knowledge, skills and perspectives. Innovation through performing arts can bring about critical reflection on the impact of practices, experiential citizen science through practices and knowledge, improved product or service development, inclusive innovation in scientific development and innovative businesses ideas and sustainable organisations.

Arts at CERN

Arts at CERN is the official arts programme of CERN, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva, where artists and scientists collaborate to explore the profound questions of our universe. Through artistic residencies, art commissions, and exhibitions, the programme invites artists from diverse disciplines to immerse themselves in CERN's unique scientific environment. Recent initiatives like the CERN Art and Science Summit 2025 showcased this intersection vividly, featuring performances by artists such as Maria Arnal, whose AI-powered choral compositions explored synthetic polyphony and digital lutherie.

Similarly, Robin Meier's Guided Meditations for the End of the Universe and Rasheedah Phillips' Black Quantum Futurism performance delved into quantum uncertainty through sound, narrative, and embodied experience.

Read more via this link.

The diversity of cross-innovation projects with performing arts illustrates that cross-sectoral innovation can both quietly build long-term ecosystems of trust and collaboration and generate visible outcomes. Both relate to the specific qualities that performing arts can bring to innovation ecosystems. Performing arts organisations bring distinct and valuable perspectives to research and innovation ecosystems. Their practices are rooted in **embodied knowledge, improvisation, and live interaction,** which foster critical, speculative, and creative thinking. The inherently **collaborative and iterative nature** of performing arts enhances concept development and opens new pathways for valorisation. A key strength of performing artists lies in their ability to **think holistically and intuitively about complex issues,** moving beyond more narrow scientific or technological frameworks. Their involvement allows researchers and industry partners to explore questions that may not yet be considered, and to **engage with emotional, ethical, and experiential dimensions of innovation and technology.** Performing arts spaces can also serve as laboratories for speculative futures, where societal challenges such as AI ethics, bias, and gender dynamics can be explored through narrative, movement, and performance. Moreover, performing arts can help to bridge the gap between research and society, by translating abstract scientific and technological concepts into **compelling, emotionally resonant experiences.** This not only enhances public engagement but also supports the uptake and understanding of innovation in more inclusive and meaningful ways[2].

[2] European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. IDEA Consult. (2022). *Fostering knowledge valorisation through the arts and cultural institutions,* Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/377987

Soulhacker
Soulhacker is a research project exploring how art and virtual reality (VR) can support psychiatric treatment. Led by the artists of CREW in collaboration with arts students from RITCS and medical experts from Brai3n, the project creates immersive VR environments for therapeutic use. It focuses on empowering patients by placing them at the center of their healing journey, encouraging self-activated mental recovery.

By merging artistic creativity with scientific research, Soulhacker aims to generate new insights and therapeutic approaches in psychiatry. Hackathons involving students and artists foster innovative artistic expressions, while biofeedback data from patients and participants contribute to both scientific and artistic understanding.

The project received funding from the Flemish Government, Department of Culture (subsidy for Innovative Partnerprojects).

3 Current challenges and needs

Despite existing evidence of the added value of performing arts practices and methodologies in cross-innovation processes, such practices remain far from mainstream. Their added value for cross-innovation is less widely recognised and even less systematically embedded in research and innovation frameworks. Cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts still faces many challenges. On the one hand, the performing arts sector faces internal barriers: it is labour-intensive, highly competitive, and underfunded, leaving little room for experimentation, risk-taking, or long-term collaboration. On the other hand, other sectors and broader innovation ecosystems display limited openness towards artistic practices. Also explicit innovation policies that integrate the performing arts remain exceptional.

To systematically identify and summarise these challenges, the following methods were used in this ekip research:

- Background-research based on literature review, European projects, policy strategies & emerging trends analysis;
- A social listening exercise carried out on social media;
- A policy corner and policy lab on cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts.

Based on this analysis we found that the main challenges relate to the following five areas:

- Attitudes towards cross-innovation with performing arts/CCI
- Adequate skills & competencies
- Availability of infrastructures supporting cross-innovation with performing arts
- Access to finance for cross-innovation
- Cross-sectoral/cross-disciplinary network opportunities

In the next paragraphs we further elaborate on the different areas.

3.1 Attitudes towards cross-innovation with performing arts/CCI

The first set of challenges relates to attitudes towards cross-innovation and (lack of) awareness of the added value or role of performing arts in open innovation ecosystems:

- **The lack of widely known examples of successful innovation projects involving the performing arts contributes to limited awareness and valorisation of their potential,** both among (innovation) stakeholders outside the sector and among performing artists and professionals.

This lack of visibility reinforces the perception that the performing arts are peripheral to innovation ecosystems, rather than active contributors. Yet, innovation is inherently embedded in performing arts practices. The continuous reinvention of techniques and approaches is a defining characteristic of performing arts organisations, driven by the pursuit of enhanced artistic expression and deeper audience engagement, core elements of the discipline that result in innovation.

- **There is a notable absence of targeted cultural or innovation policies that explicitly incorporate performing arts into open innovation strategies,** largely due to a lack of recognition of the potential value that performing arts practices can bring to such ecosystems.
- **The involvement of performing arts in innovation processes is often limited to communication practices or strictly defined tasks, which fuels the risk of instrumentalisation of the performing arts as opposed to being involved as equal innovation partners.** This may make performing arts organisations reluctant towards participation in innovation trajectories. There is a need for more balanced cooperation models in which both artists and non-cultural innovation actors engage on equal terms and are fairly remunerated, without reducing artists to mere 'suppliers' within the project framework.
- **Current business models often exclude the performing arts from innovation processes.** Conversely, **working models within the performing arts rarely foster innovation beyond their own sector.** Misaligned objectives between artists and funders, policymakers, or scientific institutions can hinder effective collaboration. Additionally, the gig economy promotes a system in which art professionals are hired for narrowly defined tasks, leaving limited space for experimentation, or fair remuneration for long-term creative engagement in innovation processes.
- **Research and development settings are often rigid and risk averse.** When performing arts are included, their role is frequently reduced to communication rather than co-creation. Explicit innovation policies that integrate the performing arts remain exceptional. As a result, performing arts are often not included in innovation frameworks, processes and projects.

3.2 Adequate skills & competencies

In both the performing arts sector and other sectors gaps in skills and competences exist to adequately collaborate in cross-innovation processes:

- Due to **limited interactions between the artistic and scientific worlds,** the skills and methodologies of artists are often underestimated as valuable resources for research and development, while those of researchers are frequently overlooked as potential sources of artistic inspiration. Artistic practices are commonly reduced to 'creative actions,' reflecting a lack of understanding of the sector-specific innovation processes within the performing arts, reinforcing hierarchical imbalances in cross-sectoral collaborations. However, the unique competencies of performing arts professionals-such as real-time interaction, audience engagement, and a strong culture of experimentation-hold significant potential to enhance the quality and depth of innovation processes.
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration in open innovation processes requires a minimum of understanding and recognition of the diversity of languages and logics of the different innovation partners involved.** This is particularly challenging in cross-innovation processes between performing arts and other innovation actors, since they often operate in different (business) logics and use very different methods to experiment, produce and innovate. It demands a great deal of effort from the various partners to align themselves in the process.
- **Existing silos in education (arts education, STEM education,...) and gaps in curricula on cross-innovation both on theoretical and practical level** prevent both artists and innovation partners with a non-cultural background from learning about co-creation models through which innovation can occur. There is **also a lack of cross-sectoral vocational training,** which means that people do not have or develop the right tools to set up such collaborations.

3.3 Availability of infrastructures supporting cross-innovation with performing arts

Dedicated (physical/digital) spaces or infrastructures are important nodes in open innovation ecosystems, however few infrastructures exist to specifically support cross-innovation with performing arts:

- **The availability of open innovation infrastructures** that allow and stimulate cross-sectoral interaction and collaboration between performing arts and other sectors - including open labs, tools, and shared platforms - is limited. Existing infrastructures are usually tailored to a specific sector or user group.
- **Cross-sectoral experimental spaces must meet the needs of the various sectors involved.** On the one hand, this creates a need for multi-purpose spaces and materials that can be used in different ways. At the same time, it also requires single-purpose space and materials tailored to different types of users.
- Cross-sectoral infrastructures and projects, such as residencies, often expect promising results and often do **not allow room for failure or mistakes,** even though these are an essential part of the innovation process.

3.4 Access to finance for cross-innovation

As performing arts actors and innovation actors in other sectors often operate in very different funding systems, this brings specific challenges for financing cross-innovation:

- In the performing arts sector (and the broader CCI), the **cultural policy funding mechanisms are predominantly output oriented, project-based and highly competitive.** Resources for artistic research and development are often limited; time and space for open-ended innovation processes are often lacking. At the same time, performing arts actors are often excluded from existing funding mechanisms coming from innovation policy. This strongly limits their possibilities to participate in innovation processes.
- **Shared funding programmes** co-funded from cultural and innovation policies, are rare. This lack of integrated funding mechanisms limits the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration and experimentation. Introducing shared funding schemes or seed money specifically designed for cross-sectoral innovation projects could significantly enhance the possibilities of CCI actors to engage in the development of new innovations and encourage cross-sectoral partnerships.

Cultural & innovation funding in the next EU budget

On the 16th of July, the European Commission released its first proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), for the period 2028-2034.

The Commission proposes integrating Creative Europe with the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) into a single, streamlined initiative. The new programme, AgoraEU, will feature a revised structure consisting of three distinct strands: (1) the Creative Europe – Culture strand, (2) the MEDIA+ strand, and (3) the Democracy, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values strand, which builds on the former CERV programme.

The Horizon programme proposed for the MFF 2028-2034 has a significantly increased budget of €175 billion. The new Horizon programme aims to be "twice bigger, simpler, faster and more impactful" than its predecessor, focusing on boosting Europe's competitiveness, advancing strategic technologies like AI and quantum computing, launching "moonshot" projects, and addressing real-world challenges in areas such as health and climate. It remains to be seen to what extent the new Horizon programme will stimulate participation of actors coming from the CCI.

In the coming period, negotiations among Member States and the European Parliament about the key policy and budgetary challenges for the next MFF will be crucial for the final budgets and policy focuses of the EU.

3.5 Cross-sectoral/cross-disciplinary network opportunities

A final set of challenges relate to the existing networks and network development that support the involvement of performing arts in open innovation ecosystems:

- Cultural and innovation policies currently primarily develop in a siloed manner, resulting not only in a lack of tailored innovation strategies including the CCI or shared funding mechanisms, but also in a **limited presence of platforms or representative networks, where traditional innovation actors, policymakers and performing arts institutions and professionals (or CCI at large) can engage with one another** (e.g. through policy dialogue) and can advocate for cross-innovation with the CCI. As a result, structural collaboration at the policy level remains underdeveloped, which means that the development of cooperation in the field is not sufficiently encouraged from a policy perspective, or only to a limited extent.
- For cross-sectoral innovation to happen, **brokerage organisations/actors with sufficient know-how about the different sectors that they connect,** are very important. However, there is little recognition, adequate training or financial support for the role of brokers between cultural and non-cultural sectors.

4 Existing policy initiatives and funding for cross-innovation with performing arts

While cross-innovation as a topic has been popular for the good part of the 21st century so far, **performing arts are rarely discussed as a specific sub-niche of this broader view of how the creative industries collectively contribute to open innovation.** European, national, or regional policy documents or instruments focussing specifically on performing arts and cross-innovation are not easily found.

The **S+T+ARTS programme** remains one of the few EU initiatives that provides dedicated funding for cross-sectoral collaboration involving the performing arts. S+T+ARTS (Science + Technology + Arts) is an initiative funded under Horizon Europe that provides financial support for cross-disciplinary collaborations between the arts, science, and technology. It encourages artists, scientists, engineers, and researchers to jointly drive innovation that addresses social, ecological, and economic challenges. S+T+ARTS encompasses a range of activities aimed at integrating artistic perspectives into technological development and promoting human-centred innovation. These include residency programmes that enable co-creation between artists and technologists, exploring themes such as sustainability, digital transformation, and urban resilience. The initiative also features the S+T+ARTS Prize, an annual award recognizing outstanding projects at the intersection of science, technology, and the arts, and their impact on innovation. Additionally, it supports initiatives targeting specific societal challenges, which foster interdisciplinary approaches and educational activities.

The **EIT KIC Culture & Creativity,** an independent EU body funded under Horizon Europe, focuses on innovation within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), with cross-sectoral collaboration as one of its key priorities. Launched in 2022, its mission is to foster skills development and promote interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders in innovation, business, research, culture, and education across all CCI sub-sectors. Rather than supporting individual project schemes, EIT Culture & Creativity focuses on co-financing long-term partnerships that strengthen the global competitiveness of European CCIs. This is achieved through instruments such as the Main Innovation Call, Short Innovation Call, and Acceleration & Post-Acceleration Programmes.

Funded through the Creative Europe programme, the European Theatre initiative maintains an ongoing conversation between the European Commission and the theatre sector. It strategically strengthens the sector by working on identified sectoral challenges, network development in the European theatre scene, support in innovation development and initiations of cultural-political dialogues. During the European Theatre Forum in 2020 the first official dialogue between performing arts actors and EU policymakers was initiated, resulting in The Dresden Declaration[3], the result of a seven-month collaborative process, that articulates a shared vision for the future of theatre and performing arts in Europe in response to the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. In 2023, the second edition of the European Theatre Forum took place, resulting in the Opole recommendations[4], a high-level policy document consisting of recommendations that reflect the voice of the wide European theatre sector. Half of the six policy priorities consist of cross-sectoral topics, related to innovation.

[3] *The Dresden Declaration.* (z.d.). https://www.europeantheatreforum.eu/page/the-dresden-declaration-of-the-european-theatre-forum

[4] European Commission, Häusler, G., European Theatre Convention, & Wiley, H. (2023). ETF 2023 Opole Recommendations. In *European Theatre Forum*, via: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-sectors/performing-arts/european-theatre-initiative

Started in the beginning of 2024, **the OECD project 'Boosting innovation and productivity through cultural and creative sectors'**[5] aims to create a better understanding of innovation and productivity in the CCS and its spillovers to the wider economy. The project will result in new datasets to benchmark CCS innovation and productivity across subsectors in different countries, complemented with evidence on the spillovers effects of the CCS on the wider economy and an exploration of policies to support innovation, cross-sectoral partnerships and investment in creative capacities.

5 Policy pathways to strengthen cross-innovation with performing arts

To unlock the systemic potential of cross-innovation, a cultural shift is needed on both sides of the collaboration. It is crucial that leaders in the performing arts and in other societal domains — business, academia, healthcare, civil society — develop a shared awareness of the benefits of collaboration and cross-innovation. Sustained networks, trust-building, and mutual understanding of each sector's logics, values, and expertise are prerequisites for meaningful partnerships. Intermediaries and (cultural) brokers are crucial to bridge divides, translate across professional languages, and facilitate equal cooperation.

Policymakers, at local, national, and EU levels, can play a decisive role in creating the enabling conditions for this systemic openness. This involves not only providing resources through tailored funding instruments and infrastructure but also embedding performing arts methodologies structurally into research and innovation agendas. By supporting mediation, fostering interdisciplinary networks, and legitimising embodied and collaborative practices as valid modes of knowledge production, policy can accelerate the emergence of innovation ecosystems where performing arts are not peripheral, but integral contributors.

The recommendations that follow are structured into five interconnected building blocks – attitudes, skills, infrastructure, finance and networks – each of which addresses a key condition for enabling performing arts to become an integral part of Europe's innovation ecosystems. Taken together, these five building blocks outline a systemic approach to unlocking cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts. By embedding performing arts into innovation ecosystems, policymakers can unlock embodied, collaborative, and imaginative practices that help society experiment, reflect, and adapt to complex transitions.

5.1 Shaping attitudes for cross-innovation with performing arts

Changing attitudes is a precondition for cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts. Many barriers arise not from lack of potential, but from limited recognition of the specific values, logics, and working cultures across sectors. Both the performing arts field and external innovation ecosystems require leadership, openness, and mutual trust to unlock collaboration.

Recommendations

- **Acknowledge performing arts methodologies in innovation policy.** Recognise competencies such as improvisation, embodied foresight, and audience engagement as valid contributions to R&D and innovation processes. This requires their inclusion in evaluation frameworks and funding criteria.
- **Reframe performing arts processes as artistic research.** Shift perceptions by highlighting how research and innovation are already embedded in performing arts practices. Recognise these practices as artistic research and part of academic research, thus strengthening their legitimacy as full contributors to cross-sectoral innovation.
- **Increase visibility of good practice.** Move beyond small-scale labs and residencies by systematically documenting and showcasing successful examples of performing arts actors acting as innovators and brokers in innovation ecosystems. Make also visible the unique skills and competencies that performing artists bring in successful cross-innovations. Sharing cases and impact stories through conferences, platforms, and policy dialogues can inspire replication and raise awareness of the performing arts' contribution to innovation.

[5] OECD. (z.d.). Boosting innovation and productivity through cultural and creative sectors. In *OECD*. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/culture,-creative-industries-and-sports/pdf/OECD-Project-Boosting-innovation-and-productivity-through-cultural-and-creative-sectors.pdf/_jcr_content/renditions/original./OECD-Project-Boosting-innovation-and-productivity-through-cultural-and-creative-sectors.pdf

- **Collect and communicate impact data.** Invest in developing impact monitoring methods that allow for structured collection of (quantitative and qualitative) data and insights on the impact of cross-innovation with performing arts. Develop strategies for broad dissemination of these insights and their uptake into broader ecosystems.
- **Recognise and support mediators.** Acknowledge the pivotal role of cultural brokers and other mediators in building trust and translating between different sectoral logics. Support could include dedicated fellowship schemes that not only give visibility to these professionals but also help weave stronger cross-sectoral networks around them. Building a shared understanding, empathy and trust should be seen as core elements of such mediation.
- **Design flexible, open-ended project calls.** Calls should create space for experimentation and equal participation, accommodating practices that require diverse perspectives, embodied methods, and iterative learning. This reduces the risk of instrumentalisation and supports genuine co-creation. Pay specific attention also to providing the right financial conditions for freelancers and small organisations to participate, e.g. by providing schemes that allow remuneration for artists' preparatory time, partner search, and experimentation.
- **Foster inclusive participation in policymaking.** Involve performing arts actors more actively in working groups and advisory boards on cross-sectoral innovation, not only as communicators but as equal partners shaping policy agendas.

The SciArt Project of the Joint Research Centre

SciArt is a community of practice that bridges science, art, and policy, launched in 2016 within the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. It promotes co-creation, where artists, scientists, and policymakers collaborate equally from the start to produce artworks and explore scientific ideas.

Rather than following a top-down model, SciArt emphasises shared responsibility and interdisciplinary dialogue, fostering innovation and new approaches to global challenges like sustainability. Its latest exhibition, NaturArchy: Towards A Natural Contract (2024), exemplifies this by reimagining our relationship with nature.

Read more via this link.

5.2 Developing cross-sectoral skills & competencies

Cross-sectoral innovation requires more than technical expertise. It depends on the ability of professionals from different sectors to understand each other's logics, languages, and practices. For performing arts actors, this means recognising their unique embodied methodologies as valuable capacities in innovation processes, as well as openness and skills to engage with organisations operating in different logics. For other sectors, it means developing the openness and skills to engage with artistic practices as legitimate forms of knowledge production. Bridging these gaps demands targeted training, educational reform, and systemic recognition of new interdisciplinary profiles.

- **Create cross-sectoral learning environments.** Stimulate labs, residencies, hackathons, and other collaborative formats where artists, researchers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers can learn directly from each other in structured but experimental settings. These environments could be embedded in universities, arts organisations, and public innovation labs. Foresee (cultural) brokers in those learning environments that have the competencies to actively stimulate the cross-sectoral learning (see also section 5.3).
- **Enable space for hybrid professional roles.** Instead of immediately codifying new profiles in labour market systems, provide flexible programmes (fellowships, residencies, experimental calls) where cultural brokers, AI ethicists, impact innovationists, or interactive storytellers can emerge and evolve across sectors.
- **Strengthen leadership capacities in the performing arts.** Support leadership and entrepreneurial programmes that equip artists and cultural organisations with tools to initiate and sustain cross-sectoral innovation, including partnership building, network development, and resource mobilisation.

Create also opportunities for artists to develop technological literacy and experiment with digital tools.

- **Integrate cross-innovation into education.** Embed transdisciplinary modules in art education (conservatoires, academies), STEM programmes (engineering, health, science), and vocational training. Promote STEAM approaches that bring students together to experiment with embodied, creative, and scientific methods from an early stage.
- **Strengthen EU-level coordination.** Connect initiatives such as the Pact for Skills, Cyanotypes and EIT Culture & Creativity into a cohesive framework for skill development and explicitly include performing arts actors and methodologies within these programmes.

5.3 Expanding space and infrastructure for cross-innovation

Cross-sectoral innovation requires infrastructures - both physical and digital - that enable experimentation, encounter, and co-creation. Currently, infrastructures are siloed: artistic spaces remain primarily cultural, while innovation labs are designed for science and technology. What is needed systemically are hybrid environments that can host multiple logics at once, and that embrace process-oriented work rather than only measurable outputs. Such environments should also include support structures that help diverse actors to collaborate meaningfully and sustainably.

- **Develop hybrid infrastructures with integrated support.** Invest in environments that are adaptable for both artistic and innovation practices, while providing support such as coaching, mentorship, residencies, advisory services, and technical expertise. These infrastructures should enable embodied and collaborative experimentation while also accommodating sector-specific needs (e.g. VR labs, motion-capture studios, medical theatres). Acknowledge also the diversity of spaces and circuits needed, respecting performing arts, academic, and industry logics. Policy should support a portfolio of space types rather than a one-size-fits-all.
- **Safeguard room for risk-taking and failure.** Ensure that residencies, labs, and testbeds can function as safe environments where iteration and failure are recognised as intrinsic parts of the innovation process, not as shortcomings.
- **Stimulate existing cultural infrastructures to host cross-innovation collaborations.** Encourage cultural venues, festivals, and arts centres to host collaborations with science, health, and business actors, and conversely stimulate innovation labs and research facilities to embed artistic residencies. Funding mechanisms should empower performing artists themselves to act as initiators of such experiments, drawing on their expertise in creating safe and inclusive environments, as well as support them in making the infrastructures visible as cross-innovation spaces (see also section 5.5).
- **Strengthen digital and online infrastructures.** Support platforms for distributed co-creation, online residencies, and knowledge-sharing that connect performing arts actors with innovation ecosystems across borders.
- **Support the establishment of innovation offices of cross-disciplinary research groups within educational institutions** to initiate cross-sectoral projects across fields of study. These offices should actively promote collaboration between students in the arts, sciences, technology, and other disciplines by organising interlinking events and joint initiatives, thereby fostering a culture of transdisciplinary innovation from an early stage in education.
- **Embed mediation functions in infrastructures.** Design hybrid spaces not only as physical but also as social infrastructures, supported by mediators who can bridge logics, languages, and working cultures between different sectors.
- **Connect to broader European and regional ecosystems.** Link cultural infrastructures with frameworks such as the Network of Digital Innovation Hubs as well as cultural and civic networks like Trans Europe Halles (TEH). This ensures that performing arts actors gain access to both innovation and cultural ecosystems.
- **Map and promote existing infrastructures.** At EU and regional levels, systematically identify, showcase, and promote cross-sectoral infrastructures, so that performing arts actors know where to connect, replicate, and scale their initiatives.

Waag

Waag is a transdisciplinary organisation that brings together designers, artists, and scientists to work alongside policymakers on a wide range of technological and societal challenges. By using public research methods, Waag aims to empower as many people as possible to co-create an open, honest, and inclusive future.

Waag has collaborated with policy on multiple policy objects. It acts as a body engaging across disciplines and vocational designations leveraging, for and with policy, knowledge from both within the organisation and through shorter term engagement with other stakeholders.

In 2021, Waag was officially recognised as a Future Lab by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This designation highlights its role as a centre for forward-looking design and the application of design and technology to address societal challenges.

Read more via this link.

5.4 Unlocking flexible financing for cross-innovation

Cross-sectoral innovation with performing arts is often held back by funding structures that separate cultural and innovation budgets. Performing arts organisations struggle to dedicate resources to R&D, while innovation programmes rarely create entry points for artistic methodologies. This results in missed opportunities for mutual learning, joint experimentation, and systemic change. A financial framework that allows for flexibility, risk-taking, and reciprocity is needed — one that empowers artists as initiators, incentivises innovation actors to collaborate with them, and bridges the gap between cultural and innovation policies.

Recommendations

- **Develop blended and reciprocal funding mechanisms.** Support schemes that allow applicants to combine resources from both cultural and innovation funding calls. These should work in two directions: enabling artists to access innovation resources, and incentivising innovation actors to involve artists in their projects. Such reciprocity reduces silos and makes cross-innovation financially viable. Work with mission-oriented thematic calls alongside open calls, as thematic calls can inspire partners that want to step into cross-innovation to find a common ground and shared innovation ambitions to collaborate for innovation.
- **Promote process-oriented funding models for cross-innovation.** Move beyond short-term, output-driven grants towards seed funding, iterative development support, and exploratory research budgets. This type of funding is not only vital for cross-innovation, but also beneficial for innovation in other sectors that depend on experimentation and learning. Make sure that the funding models allow for iterative experimentation, including space for failure.
- **Allocate small-scale cross-innovation budgets within cultural funding.** Add dedicated budgets to cultural projects so that innovations emerging organically within the performing arts can be valorised and disseminated across other sectors. This makes cross-innovation possible without requiring organisations to leave their cultural funding frameworks.
- **Empower artists as equal innovation partners.** Ensure that funding programmes enable performing artists and organisations to join consortia as fully equal partners rather than only as subcontractors. Recognise their ability to design innovation processes and create safe, participatory environments. Also foresee schemes where artists can remain in the driver's seat and lead cross-sectoral projects.
- **Adapt innovation procurement schemes for the arts.** Public innovation procurement means that governments act as "launching customers," purchasing innovative solutions from providers. These schemes should explicitly allow for artistic methodologies - for example, commissioning performing arts organisations to prototype citizen engagement processes or to design immersive foresight environments. This would open public innovation demand to the contributions of the arts.

- **Lower entry barriers for small actors.** Simplify application procedures, reduce administrative thresholds, and ensure fair eligibility for freelancers and smaller CCI organisation in innovation funding.
- **Guarantee fairness and sustainability.** Cross-sectoral funding models should include requirements for fair remuneration and balanced cooperation, ensuring that artists are not instrumentalised and that careers in the performing arts remain viable.
- **Adapt evaluation frameworks.** Critically review current evaluation frameworks for innovation funding. Develop new evaluation tools that focus (also) on societal impact. Tailor the evaluation of process quality to the specificities of cross-sectoral collaborations for innovation.

5.5 Enhancing the development of sustained networks stimulating cross-Innovation

Cross-sectoral innovation thrives in ecosystems where connections are actively built and maintained through networks. At present, networks across culture, innovation, science, and civil society are largely organised in silos. Very few networks exist that connect those different areas. To shift systemically, network development must be supported as more than "matchmaking": it requires **intermediaries, brokers, and durable networks** that link (performing) arts to other sectors on equal terms and beyond one-off collaborations.

- **Promote structured intersections between performing arts and other sectors.** Strengthen matchmaking processes on existing cross-sectoral platforms, facilitating two-way exchanges of methodologies and knowledge. Such intersections should be designed to foster sustained co-creation, not only symbolic or short-term collaboration. Next to exchanges in cross-sectoral networks, also actively stimulate demand from industry and innovation stakeholders through business and innovation networks, to increase bottom-up interest.
- **Align cultural and innovation networks.** Ensure stronger cross-links between cultural networks (such as Trans Europe Halles, European Creative Hubs Network or IETM) and innovation ecosystems (such as Digital Innovation Hubs or EIT Culture & Creativity). This alignment would provide performing arts actors with access to both cultural and technological infrastructures and support systemic openness in policy and practice.
- **Support the development of a network of co-creation spaces.** Support an EU-wide network of co-creation venues supporting cross-innovation with performing arts. By linking existing initiatives and spaces, such a network would strengthen the ecosystem for cultural and social innovation, while maximising the impact of local initiatives at a European scale. Align the network to the EU work on European Research Infrastructures, e.g. by supporting members of the network to become member of the Association of European-Level Research Infrastructures Facilities (ERF-AISBL) or by having a voice in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI).
- **Recognise and strengthen network intermediaries and (cultural) brokers.** Acknowledge that network development is not only about providing the right spaces but also about supporting mediators who can bridge logics, languages, and working cultures. Support the creation of fellowship schemes for intermediaries, giving them visibility, recognition, and resources to build durable trust networks. These fellowships can also foster interregional and transnational exchange between mediators, creating a professional community of practice.
- **Stimulate the development of an ecosystem approach.** Promote "innovation swarms" where performing arts organisations can connect to specific clusters (e.g. through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform). These swarms should operate as dynamic, process-driven infrastructures that combine shared methodologies, continuous learning, and distributed collaboration acr oss sectors. The regional level appears to be an interesting level to organise cross-innovation ecosystems, including also regional intermediaries who can mobilise EU funding.

- **Ensure inclusive participation in networks.** Network development should explicitly include small organisations and grassroots actors, not only large institutions. Simplified entry points and micro-grants for small organisations and freelancers to participate in networks can ensure diversity and avoid elite-driven ecosystem networks.

FoAM

FoAM is a unique collective whose activities span a wide range of disciplines, reflecting the diversity of its members. Bringing together artists, scientists, engineers, designers, gardeners, cooks, and facilitators, FoAM operates as a community of generalists working across and beyond traditional boundaries.

Their approach is rooted in open-source culture: they share their work publicly, maintain a collaborative wiki, and organise events that encourage participatory learning and co-creation. FoAM translates visionary ideas into tangible public experiments, inviting dialogue and critique from people of varied backgrounds.

Rather than adhering to conventional disciplinary frameworks, FoAM fosters a space where transformation, collaboration, and interdisciplinary exploration are central. Their work exemplifies how creative practices can intersect with scientific inquiry and social engagement.

Read more via this link.