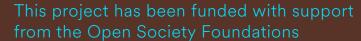# In search of equal partners

On being a SWANA artist and cultural worker in the EU

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Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU. As the only intersectoral network, it brings together all practices in culture, from the performing arts to literature, the visual arts, design and cross-arts initiatives, to community centres and activist groups.

CAE believes in the value and values of culture and its contribution to the development of sustainable and inclusive societies.

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1. Introduction

This study is part of a project called *Launching advocacy actions in the EU to promote the inclusion of MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) artists, cultural workers and organisations in post-COVID-19 EU cultural policies and funding schemes.* The project is conducted by Culture Action Europe (CAE). The main objective of the project is:

> to involve artists, cultural workers and organisations from MENA countries residing in the EU in shaping European cultural policies and funding schemes that are more inclusive and better safeguard the fundamental rights of these groups (including working conditions, mobility, freedom of artistic expression and gender equality).

According to its terms of reference, the specific objective of this study – entitled *In search of Equal Partners* – is:

> to reveal the particular circumstances and realities of MENA artists and cultural workers residing in the EU and determine the main challenges in living a fulfilling professional life, as well as co-operating with their EU peers. Specific focus will be on issues of working conditions, freedom of movement and freedom of artistic expression. This will be assessed in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, which has abruptly aggravated those working and living conditions.

Ultimately, the study is meant to allow CAE to identify relevant and plausible recommendations at EU level. this will inspire further advocacy on the issue of the situations of the MENA artists and cultural workers residing in the EU, and at the same time include and involve those who would benefit from such advocacy efforts in their current and future work.

2. The process: definitions and methodology

The initial preparatory meetings for this study started around April 2021 and concluded that the project plan is ambitious for good reasons. However, the lack of conceptual definitions in the project plan and the relatively weak relationship between CAE and the target community of artists and cultural workers implied a challenge for the project team and its main researcher to live up to the ambitions outlined in the project plan.

The importance of the process of finding a way forward – including getting in touch with the community and outlining an adequate methodology for the present study – can't be underestimated. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the lessons from the process may be the most valuable outcome for CAE, both in terms of the conclusions drawn in this study and future advocacy strategies.

This chapter is therefore dedicated to the process itself. It is not a detailed account of every meeting and every challenge; neither is it an attempt to critically discuss the courses of action. Rather, it is an attempt to document a learning process as objectively as possible because it acts as a foundation for future actions CAE may take regarding advocacy for the relevant community of artists and cultural workers. The lessons from this process would also be valuable in terms of any future action by the EU institutions with the purpose of strengthening the situation of the relevant community of artists and cultural workers.

2.1 The challenge of definitions

The project plan did not provide definitions for some of the concepts that are central to this study. It is, therefore, necessary to outline in short a review of the process behind the choices of definitions and methodology made. Unless otherwise stated, the assessments discussed below are the result of a dialogue between the CAE team, a CAE expert pool and the main researcher.

MENA and SWANA

MENA is an internationally acknowledged acronym for the Middle East and North Africa. However, there is no standardised definition of MENA, and several alternative interpretations are used in different contexts.[1] The project's funding partner did not provide or commission a specific definition. Its programs in the region list only a selection of those countries that would fall under the wider understanding of the term MENA.[2]

The initial approach in the planning of this study was therefore self-identification, meaning that the study refers to all individuals who voluntarily identify as belonging to or having their roots in those countries that fall under the widespread and common understanding of the acronym 'MENA'. This approach entails two components. Firstly, the definition of MENA is intentionally not specified and thus kept broad enough to avoid the exclusion of certain countries or groups of individuals; this was deemed unnecessary as it would conflict with the focus of the project, which is inclusivity.

Secondly, self-identification is adopted as the primary method of categorisation thus avoiding the assignment of identity or belonging using so-called 'third-party categorisation'[3]. The latter could be problematic in several ways when fluid identities, senses of belonging and definitions are involved. The adopted approach to the definition of the MENA region[4] and who is assumed to belong to that region[5] thus followed standards and recommendations agreed on in international human rights law. It should be noted that self-identification is sometimes considered problematic for

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1   See, for instance: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MENA

2   See: https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/who-we-are/programs/middle-east-and-north-africa-program

3   For further information on different types of identification see Timo Makkonen, *European Handbook on Equality Data* (2007), Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

4   UN Human Rights Committee, *General Recommendation on Article 18*. The Committee specifically pointed out the principle of non-exclusion unless necessary regarding religion and culture, where culture is also closely associated with ethnicity. See also: CERD Committee, Fifty-fifth session (1999). *General recommendation XXIV concerning Article 1 of the Convention*, paragraphs 2 and 3.

5   On self-categorisation, see UN CERD Committee, *General recommendation VIII*. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.7 12.05.2004.

various reasons. However, as Makkonen (2007) points out[6] it is "arguably well in line with the underlying values of human rights, the first of which is human dignity, and the requirement of the right to respect for information relating to private life ".

Since the focus of the project is inclusivity, seeking guidance in international human rights law for an adequate approach seemed to be the most reasonable thing to do, as no definitions were provided a priori.

An additional facet of self-identification is the use of terminology that is considered the most accurate and acceptable by the community to which it refers. The consultations and conversations with the experts in the reading panels (see next section) indicated a clear consensus that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) term should be avoided, as it is rooted in colonial cartography that places England at its centre.[7] Instead, the term South-West Asia and North Africa (SWANA) was suggested as the acceptable term. In this study, 'SWANA' is used to refer to the region referred to as 'MENA' in the project plan.

Residing in the EU

The project plan also lacks a definition of what 'residing' means, besides the interpretation that the project does not target persons who are in the EU for a temporary visit. Again, departing from inclusivity as the main focus of the project, the obvious choice was to not narrow the definition. 'Residing' is therefore understood to mean living or working in one of the Member States independently of the legal residency status of the persons concerned. Thus, the term covers anything from being a citizen of a Member State (through naturalisation or otherwise) to being a third country citizen permanently residing in the EU, to holders of a student visa, to holders of a temporary working permit, to refugees or even asylum-seekers, to mention some of the more obvious categories (it should be noted that none of the participants in the consultations or the expert reading panels is an asylum-seeker to the knowledge of the main researcher). The legal status of residency has not been specifically considered in the project and this study unless it was discussed in relation to the themes of the study, such as working conditions or mobility.

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6   Timo Makkonen, *European Handbook on Equality Data* (2007), Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

7   For example, see Jamil Khoury, *American SWANA: A Progressive Theatre Movement Soars (2021). Available at:* https://www.massreview.org/node/9560

Artists, cultural workers and organisations

Definitions of the concepts of 'artist' and 'cultural workers and organisations' are not only lacking but also unreasonable to try to construct within the remit of this study. Therefore, no criteria have been developed to construct categories or demarcations that would narrow these terms in any way.

2.2 The process: finding the way

This part describes the process from planning this study to finalising the methodology.

CAE expert pool meetings and outreach

The process for planning this report started with the decision by the CAE team to consult several persons from its network who in different ways have professional experience of working with or for the benefit of SWANA artists and cultural workers. The discussions covered several aspects of the project plan in relation to this study. It was concluded that approaching the target group is the first necessary step. Providing information about the project, the study and CAE future advocacy ambitions was identified as a crucial aspect before deciding the methodology. A relationship with the target group needed to be built, as any lack of confidence in the process from the target group would risk rendering both study and project ineffective.

The CAE expert pool included the following persons:
· **Marie Le Sourd** (On the Move)
· **Ilinca Martorell** (Réseau européen des centres culturels de rencontre)
· **Alexandra Buchler** (Literature Across Frontiers)
· **Dace Kiulina** (Interarts Foundation)
· **Burak Sayin** (Trans Europe Halles)
· **Julie Ward** (former UK MEP)
· **Vincent Curie** (B&S Europe)
· **Micaela Casalboni** (Compagnia del Teatro dell'Argine)
· **Fanny Bouquerel** (Roberto Cimetta Fund)

CAE disseminated information about the project through its network and members. An invitation to an initial consultation with those who fall under the wide definition of 'artists, cultural workers and organisations from SWANA countries residing in the EU' was sent out. Those interested were invited to take part in a meeting that would provide information about the project and serve as an initial consultation on this study. Attendance was offered by voluntary registration at CAE's website.

The consultation

The first consultation was held in April 2021, where the first proposal for a methodology was presented to a community of 70 persons. It entailed a desk-based research review of all available information in all the Member States on legislation and policies that might affect the SWANA community in terms of the three themes of the project: working conditions, mobility and freedom of artistic expression. The outcome would be discussed with the group to help identify discrepancies between the formal framework and the reality of the group's circumstances. This approach aimed to identify trends and commonalities that might or might not fall under EU competence; it would also allow the singling out of those policy areas that affect the group negatively and fall under the EU's competence or might be influenced by the instruments at the disposal of the EU's institutions. This would enable CAE to formulate concrete recommendations at EU level. A second discussion took place in in May 2021 within the framework of a larger CAE meeting including all its members.

Input on the methodology was gathered, and this indicated that a more adequate methodology would entail a more inclusive and collaborative approach by ensuring active contributions from the group or community. In response to that input, a different methodology was adopted – one that better resonated with the group's aspirations.

The final methodology

As a result, the methodology was reviewed and adjusted so it would resonate with the aspirations of the consulted community in a better way. The final methodology is a hybrid that mixes elements of equality impact assessment philosophy[8] with elements of action research[9] and adopts a collaborative approach. The main idea is to understand the views of those who are affected by current policies (based on the available and relevant research) to enable identification of the challenges that are relevant to further action and advocacy at EU level.

The model relies on reading panels – one for each of these three main themes. The process evolved as follows:

1   Three specialised researchers were recruited from the CAE network for each of the three themes.

2   Each specialised researcher was asked to suggest recent reports that sufficiently cover the themes with specific regard to the EU, where possible.

3   Through an open call, some experts from the SWANA cultural community participating in the project were recruited for reading panels.

4   All experts in the reading panels were asked to read the suggested materials and submit a review of a maximum of three pages answering three non-mandatory guide questions.[10]

5   The reading panels worked in collaboration with the specialised researchers who introduced the respective themes and reading materials.

6   Each reading panel finalised its work in the format of an open unstructured discussion based on the provided reviews. The discussions were led and moderated by the specialised researchers and aimed to identify the main trends and commonalities.

7   The main researcher had the task of producing this final report.

8   The research co-ordinator ensured the administrative quality of the entire process.

Both the co-ordinator of the research and the main researcher attended all meetings.

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8   Due to a lack of anything other than gender data, equality impact assessment is generally conducted in relation to gender or sex. Before Brexit, the UK was the only Member State with legislation that regulates impact assessment regarding all protected grounds. For a more general understanding of the concept in the UK; see: https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/EDI-objectives-data-and-research/Equality-analysis-guidelines or in Northern Ireland: https://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers/Public-Authorities/Section75/Section-75/What-is-an-EQIA

9   See, for instance: https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/action-research/

10 The open call and suggested readings including instructions for reading panels can be found at https://cultureactioneurope.org/files/2021/06/Call_for_participants_Reading_panels newdeadline.pdf

The final team

The study's final team included 17 people with specific remits, as follows.

The expert reading panel on working conditions:
- **Eyad Houssami**, Theatre maker and postgraduate researcher
- **Meriem Mehadji**, Consultant, researcher and teacher in cultural policies and diplomacy
- **Sepideh Rahaa**, Multidisciplinary artist, researcher and educator
- **Fairooz Tamimi**, Award winning novelist, journalist and entrepreneur
- **Amna Walayat**, Visual artist.

The expert reading panel on mobility:
- **Reem Abd Ulhamid**, Independent journalist
- **Jumana Al-Yasiri**, Arts manager
- **Ceyda Berk-Söderblom**, Art manager, curator, festival programmer and entrepreneur
- **Houari Bouchenak**, Researcher and curator
- **Eyad Houssami**, Theatre maker and postgraduate researcher

The expert reading panel on freedom of expression:
- **Reem Abd Ulhamid**, Independent journalist
- **Nawar Alhusari**, Practice-based artistic researcher
- **Rana Issa, Researcher**, cultural producer
- **Rajae Mechkour**, Cultural professional

Specialist researchers:
- **Marie Le Sourd** (Secretary-General, On the Move)
- **Marcin Górski** (Assistant Professor at the Department of the European Constitutional Law at the University of Lodz)
- **Gabriele Rosana** (Policy Director, Culture Action Europe)

Co-ordinator of the project: **Mamen Garcia** (CAE)
Main researcher: **Yamam Al-Zubaidi** (independent consultant, Noon Consulting)

The expert reading panels included individuals from the following countries of origin: Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Pakistan, Turkey and Syria. Their countries of residence were: Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

The professional backgrounds of members of the expert reading panels included experience as researchers, advisors, teachers, critics, theatre-makers, artists, creators, curators, journalists and filmmakers, among others.

2.3. The parameters of this report

This report is a result of a consultation and collective research with a number of persons from the community of SWANA artists and cultural workers within the EU. The methodology adopted is at the intersection of collaborative action research and equality impact assessment. It simulates action research in the sense that it is conducted simultaneously with the other activities included in the overall project and is expected – through the interaction with other ongoing activities – to deliver practical results. These include advocacy recommendations relevant to the target group and a higher degree of involvement of individuals and organisations from the target community in future advocacy work.[11] It simulates equality impact assessment in the sense that all recommendations regarding advocacy efforts are adopted only after they are subjected to scrutiny by the target community.

The starting point for this report is the review of a selection of relevant reports in the field by the reading panels. The experts in the panels were not asked to represent the whole community or any organisation they might be affiliated with; rather they were given the task to provide their personal opinions based on their own experiences, professional expertise and knowledge of their community in general terms.

This means that the validity of the statements made in the next section can be said to be relatively high. Due to the limited number of individuals involved in the reading panels, it is possible to question the reliability of the information; that is, the perspectives covered might be too few or too narrow to generate the same picture if another set of persons was consulted. This raises the issue of whether the identified areas of further

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11   This involvement may or may not entail future affiliation with the CAE as a network.

advocacy are necessarily the most urgent ones. However, the individual accounts presented by the experts in the reading panels seem to resonate with each other and the topics to a very high degree. It is, therefore, not unfair to say that the identified areas for action are urgent enough. This renders the reliability issue less critical from the point of view of advocacy.

It is very important to bear these aspects in mind when reading the report, as marginalised communities tend to be diverse even in terms of their marginalisation. Representation is a common challenge when it comes to consulting such communities. This is common knowledge in the field and is well documented in the relevant literature. The consultation organised by CAE and the reviews provided by the reading panels also confirmed the necessity of adopting a high degree of accuracy when making statements about the challenges that face SWANA artists and cultural workers.

3. A reading of the narrative

This section presents an overall picture of the situation of SWANA artists and cultural workers in the EU based on the 14 reviews of selected literature provided by the experts in the reading panels.

The first part of the section is an attempt to summarise the narrative of the reviews and to focus on the main trends and commonalities, rather than present a list of all the issues that have been raised. In this respect, it should be noted that CAE will produce a full list of these issues that will be attached to both this report and the technical report. The second part of the section is an attempt to decipher the narrative and provide an explanatory framework.

Furthermore, the narrative presented here does not strictly follow the three main themes of the reading panels – that is, the aforementioned working conditions, mobility and freedom of artistic expression. The literature, as well as the reading panels' reviews and the final discussions held with each panel, all point to the fact that these issues overlap each other in various ways to such an extent as to make it not always easy to identify unambiguous causalities. However, one general impression from the 14 provided reviews is that working conditions tend to have a profound effect on the choices artists and cultural workers might or might not have concerning mobility and freedom of artistic expression.

All the elements in the narrative presented below reflect a general trend in the reviews provided by the panels and the final discussions held with the panels. It is not unreasonable to say that the trends presented are relevant across the EU. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that different elements of the narrative might be of higher or lower relevance in the different Member States. This is because most of the issues raised are related to national legislation and traditional traditions. As the purpose of this report is to identify areas for advocacy on the EU level, mentioning assumed 'best' and 'worst' practices from specific Member States is avoided.

3.1. The harsh reality: to make art or not to make art?

To large extent, the reviews agree on the position that the provided literature seems to depart from a standardised image of the artist or cultural worker. To put it another way, the literature does not seem to seriously consider the diversity of the cultural sector and the inequalities that exist within it. One exception, though, is that of gender perspective; This presence might be explained partially by the availability of disaggregated data.

According to the reviews, the literature does not seem to critique legislation, policies and rules in terms of their impacts on different communities within the cultural sector. This is not to say that the picture provided in the literature is incorrect, as most of the observations in the literature are either openly or implicitly endorsed in the reviews. Rather, the reviews indicate that disparate realities deserve to be considered in the analysis.

Generally, the reviews seem to discuss the situation of artists and cultural workers who can be described as a recent generation of arrivals to the EU.[12] On the whole, the picture provided by the reviews is that the **SWANA community of artists and cultural workers meet three main challenges when they first arrive in their EU country of residence: lack of knowledge of the language, lack of knowledge of the policies, regulations and legal system and finally lack of access to the relevant networks.** In contrast to their European or established peers, these three factors in combination have far-reaching long-term consequences.

First, depending on which kind of residency permit they have, parts of the community are expected to be financially self-sufficient to be able to keep their residency permits. As a result, some are pushed to take any available jobs on the labour market and must try to pursue their artistic and cultural ambitions in their free time. This makes networking with the cultural sector a much more difficult and drawn-out enterprise that makes the artist or cultural worker become involuntarily locked in their community of ex-pats rather than joining wider networks. Not unexpectedly, the **relevant funding sources in such a scenario are mostly related to projects that use artistic and cultural activities as a tool for integration policies.**

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12   The author of this report is under the impression that it concerns the artistic community that arrived in the EU during the last 10-15 years. It should be noted, though, that this is a general assumption concluded from the reports and meetings with the expert reading panels.

Secondly, the act of pursuing artistic and cultural ambitions in one's free time tends to be regarded as non-professional, adding to the already existing challenge of getting professional qualifications recognised. Several of the reviews describing the reality of SWANA artists and cultural workers pinpoint the challenges in proving their statuses as professional artists or cultural workers, which are often required for joining the appropriate professional organisations.

Seen from another angle, grants and non-profit funding constitute an important vehicle for artists and cultural workers in pursuing their careers, especially in a new environment. **Accessing grants is, at least partially, dependent on the recognition of professional qualifications** – an issue that seems to be a widespread challenge, according to the reviews. This seems to be true not only in the case of undocumented qualifications. Most newcomers must refer to past work with networks, institutions and persons in another part of the world to prove their past professional work. In combination with the (formally) unrecognised qualifications, this generates **a risk of rendering experienced professionals as beginners**.

On the other hand, depending on the country of residence, grants may not even be a plausible way forward due to tax regulations. **In some countries, grants (up to a certain level) are not subject to taxation and thus are not considered as income in terms of the conditions for a residence permit**. Therefore, an artist might have no other option than to take any job, even if grants may be accessible.

Against this backdrop, it becomes obvious that mobility is a real challenge for the SWANA artists and cultural workers. Firstly, the community predominantly consists of freelancers, for whom mobility opportunities without funding are not an option. Secondly, the expected reference to local anchoring is problematic for a community that is hardly settled in its new environment. In general, mobility opportunities provide different definitions of the residency requirements that are not always straightforward to interpret and thus may be perceived as discriminatory.[13] Additionally, in some instances, renewals of residency permits may take a long time (even up to a year), rendering any travel plans during that period impossible.

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13   Eligibility in mobility can be defined by terms such as 'resident of', 'people from', 'resident in', 'legally resident in', 'working and living in', 'based in' and 'registered in the EU' to mention just some cases in point (these examples were kindly provided by specialist researcher Marie Le Sourd).

The set of challenges summarised above can be described as systemic in the sense that they are triggered by a structure of legal and policy-related frameworks. However, there seems to be another set of systemic challenges that relates to a combination of assumptions, behaviours and traditions that generates and reinforces already existing inequalities.[14] The narrative in this respect reflects a large range of challenges that face SWANA artists and cultural workers when they are perceived as 'other'. The provided materials mention everything from open or indirect discrimination on the one hand, and saviourism, tokenism and whitewashing whiteness on the other.

Open or intentional direct and indirect discrimination does exist in terms of access to jobs or networks and other relevant opportunities. However, according to the narrative in the reviews, it is much more likely for **SWANA artists and cultural workers to face stigmatisation and the symbolic politics of inclusion and diversity** that at the end of the day turn into another form of systemic discrimination. Expectations that SWANA artists and cultural workers have themes such as dictatorship, wars, migration and integration as their primary interests seem to be common. This has consequences for the individuals' freedom to make their own artistic choices. Additionally, when artistic and cultural projects are used as tools for integration policies, SWANA artists or cultural workers involved risk being primarily perceived as 'integration agents'. The reviews highlight the lack of representation in decision-making positions within the cultural scene as a sign of the systemic discrimination which turns them into integration agents, denying their artistic visions and professionalism.

Overall, the narrative in the reviews seems to indicate a high risk of artists and cultural workers of SWANA origin leaving their artistic and cultural professions because they do not see a plausible way forward. Another alternative is to limit their artistic and cultural careers to their own already marginalised communities, with limited attachment to the wider cultural sector and arts scene.

The Covid-19 crisis has hit marginalised communities within the cultural sector even harder than the established sector. Residency permits and visas have become a more urgent and critical issue. Furthermore, the costs related to additional health

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14 The term 'systemic' is used here in line with the definition provided in Ronald Craig, *Systemic Discrimination in Employment and the Promotion of Ethnic Equality* (2007), Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden: "I submit that systemic discrimination in employment is made up of individual acts of discrimination or "neutral" rules with discriminatory effect, which form a pattern which reflects an organizational culture or administrative structure which condones or tolerates such acts – or permits such acts to go undetected and as a result to flourish".

requirements (such as costly PCR tests) have made the already disrupted mobility even more difficult. The consequences are harsh for a community that is already dependent on taking every possible opportunity to pursue their careers.

3.2. An attempt to understand

The narrative presented by the expert reviewers indicates that the community seems to be locked between unfavourable systemic pre-conditions and systemic discrimination and stigmatisation.

Where legal and policy-related systemic pre-conditions are concerned, the general impression is that most of these are generated by national legislation and do not seem to fall under EU competence. To the extent that these laws implement any EU legislation, they are assumed here to be in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (complying with Article 6 TEU) and with the fundamental values of the Union outlined in Article 2 TEU. This assumption is based on the lack of any information or circumstances that would indicate a specific breach of EU obligations by a given Member State.[15] It is therefore not unreasonable to adopt such an assumption as a starting point for this attempt to decipher the narrative presented above.

That said, some national laws and policies are generating unfavourable circumstances for the community. This can be explained in terms of the relevance of those laws and policies for the community of artistic and cultural professionals. Normally, any newcomer to a Member State becomes subject to national integration policies. These policies are normally favourable to the newcomer in terms of targeted support for him or her to learn the language of the country and become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible, as the first steps towards participatory citizenship.

One example of how these integration policies can be understood is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). MIPEX is a tool that measures migrant integration policies based on indicators from eight policy areas to give a "multi-dimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in society".[16] The policy areas covered are

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15   A more confident assertion on the matter would require a more thorough and accurate scrutiny that is beyond the terms of reference for this study.

16   All data from MIPEX is available at: https://www.mipex.eu. MIPEX is co-ordinated by Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB https://www.cidob.org/en/) and Migration Policy Group (MPG https://www.migpolgroup.com).

labour market mobility, education, political participation, access to nationality, family reunion, health, permanent residence and anti-discrimination. The index covers all EU Member States alongside several other countries and has been recognised by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission as "one of the few 'alive' sources of information" on the subject.[17]

For 2019, EU Member States scored between 39 and 86 out of a possible 100 points on the MIPEX scale, reflecting the different approaches and traditions across the Union. These figures are for the aggregated scores on all eight policy areas. The overall score for the EU28[18] in 2019 is 50, a slight increase from 48 in 2014. In addition, MIPEX allows a comparison of different indicators and in this respect, the EU28 scored 49 for the indicator 'equal opportunities' in 2019 – a slight increase from a score of 43 in 2014. Interestingly, the EU28 score for that indicator is not only under 50 out of a possible 100 points, but also lower than that of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

There is an enormous body of research on national integration policies, but it is not possible to review all the general trends recognised in the research here. However, one often-highlighted shortcoming of these policies deserves particular attention in this context: what we have chosen to label the 'narrow approach'. To take one example, a comparative literature review from 2006 commissioned by the OECD summarised the policy approach in OECD countries as follows:[19]

> "Integration policies tend to be developed in response to events rather than as a considered strategy co-ordinated across government with clear policy objectives. Current strategies often focus on a narrow migrant target group neglecting individuals who may equally need support. Some integration processes are more susceptible to policy intervention than others. Delivery through the institutions of the welfare state can lead to migrants being perceived and perceiving themselves as dependent. The approach taken within some states may encourage and politicise ethnic identities."

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17   See: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/default/files/migration_policy_indexes_04.04.2018.pdf

18   The website provides the EU28 as a pre-aggregated category. It is worth noting that the UK scored higher than the EU28 in both the overall score and for the indicator 'equal opportunities' in both 2014 and 2019.

19   Sarah Spencer, *Social Integration of Migrants in Europe: A Review of the European Literature 2000–2006*, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford and Betsy Cooper, St John's College, Oxford (2006). Available at: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2006-Integration_Europe_Literature_Review_OECD.pdf

Additionally, research on integration policies and practices has been itself subjected to critique. According to Spencer and Charsley (2021),[20] the common five shortcomings in the research are: normativity, the negative objectification of migrants as 'other', the outdated imaginary of society, methodological nationalism and a narrow focus on migrants in the factors shaping integration processes. It is not unreasonable to imagine these five critiques being applicable to the integration policies themselves. It is precisely these five critical elements in combination that we chose to label here as the 'narrow approach' to integration.

The shortcomings of this narrow approach seem to have an explanatory potential regarding the narrative presented by the expert reading panels. A narrow or one-size-fits-all approach stands in opposition to a tailored equal-opportunities approach. This opposition could explain the MIPEX figures. In other words, even if national integration policies are formally in line with EU values, they risk generating unequal outcomes within the diverse pool of newcomers if they do not outline *real* equality of opportunity[21] as one of their main guiding principles.

Furthermore, as a review of 130 scientific studies by the MIPEX team[22] reveals, the way integration policies are shaped affects not only the presumed target group for the policy but also the attitudes and the behaviour of the public. One deficiency of the narrow approach, as the narrative of the expert reviewers implies, is that the integration process is seen as a one-way process, whereas it is, in fact, two-way. This might explain the other challenge that faces the community: stigmatising assumptions on the artistic and aesthetic interests of the community. In this respect, much of the attitudes in the cultural sector seem to depart from a feeling of solidarity with the newcomers. However, as Al-Haj Saleh (2018) correctly points out, solidarity is always subject to power relations, with one side being assigned the role of the weaker, passive or grateful recipient. Instead, partnership is a more sustainable approach:[23]

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20   Sarah Spencer and Katharine Charsley, Reframing 'integration': acknowledging and addressing five core critiques, *Comparative Migration Studies* 9:18 (2021). Available at: https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40878-021-00226-4

21   For a detailed discussion on the distinction between formal and real (substantial) equality of opportunity see: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/#SubEquOpp

22   See the conclusions at: https://www.mipex.eu/key-findings

23   Yassin Al-Haj Saleh, *A Critique of Solidarity* (2018), available at: https://www.aljumhuriya.net/en/content/critique-solidarity

"Partnership, in contrast to solidarity, has no center; works in multiple directions rather than one; is based on equality rather than power; and is at odds with mutual competition, and the polarization that follows therefrom. It has the potential to be a positive undertaking for the reality of global interconnectedness and an acceptance of the shared ownership of the world. Causes and cooperation are not located in two different worlds, as the ideology of solidarity implies. It is the same world, and the same one cause, even if its faces and expressions vary."

The narrative of the expert reading panels clearly indicates a disappointment with the lack of interest in a partnership of equals from their countries of residence and the cultural sector and the arts scene specifically.

According to the expert reading panels, one example of the solidarity approach can be found in 'cultural diplomacy' programs. Essentially, cultural diplomacy means employing culture and the arts, as well as freedom of expression, as a tool for strengthening a country's diplomatic and cultural profile. The current generation of SWANA artists and cultural workers includes individuals that relocated to the EU through such programs and grants. With the relocation in place, the granting state or agency sees the objective of the cultural diplomacy intervention fulfilled. The individual artists in question later find themselves on their own when the program or grant has finished or run out. This is not to say that the opportunities offered through cultural diplomacy interventions are not needed. It is rather an indication that lack of partnership seems to be firmly entrenched in foreign policy, integration policy and the cultural sector and arts scene.

The professional trajectory of artistic and cultural professions is very much process-oriented, and depends on networking, mobility and freedom of artistic expression as a starting point. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach not only becomes irrelevant for those professions but also risks becoming a barrier to pursuing their professional development when even the residency permit itself may become under threat due to migration rules and policies. Artistic and cultural professionals, due to the nature of their work, are not easily "susceptible to policy intervention" unless a policy intervention is tailored to fit their professional needs.

Being subject to integration policies, the first years of the SWANA artists and cultural workers in the EU seem to establish the weak and unequal position of compared to their European and established colleagues. The narrative indicates that, even after 10-15 years in the EU, the community is still struggling with the same initial challenges that it faced as newcomers. The narrow approach to integration policies seems to have a long-standing effect beyond these first few years. That is not to say that positive examples of treating the community as equals are completely lacking.

The panels provided a couple of such examples, though these are exceptions that rather prove the rule.

Large parts of the SWANA region have been enduring waves of instability, including wars, revolutions and continuous fierce struggles for social justice. The narrative of the expert reading panels gives the impression that the present generation of SWANA artists and cultural workers has lived through all these instabilities and developed a strong resilience. This is an essential factor in their attitude to the world. While they see themselves as a part of the global cultural and intellectual force in the face of wars and inequalities, they still find themselves treated as recipients of narrow and rigid integration policies or a form of solidarity that can resemble charity. They are often encouraged to integrate into a new society where they are expected to take any available jobs, or act as integration policy agents and leave their professional development aside.

That is not to say that the community is not interested in contributing to social cohesion. But being involuntarily reduced to the status of integration policy agent contradicts notions of the freedom of artistic expression and active agency embraced by this community. In that sense, it is not unfair to say that the new generation of SWANA artists and cultural workers gains its resilience from its artistic and cultural work. Paradoxically, leaving their countries of origin is both an act of resilience and revolt rather than a sign of defeat. Seeking refuge in Europe is a part of this resilience.

It is a generation that carries on the strong tradition of resilience in the modern history of artistic movements in the region. One example of this tradition can be found in the manifesto of the Iraqi Art Group Al-Ru'yah al-Jadida entitled *Towards a New Vision*. It is an adequate description of the attitude of the community discussed here:[24]

> "We reject the artist of divisions and boundaries. We advance. We fall. But we will not retreat. We present to the world our new vision."

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24 Dia Al-Azzawi, Ismail Fattah, Saleh Al-Jumaie, Muhammad Muhraddin, Rafa Al-Nasiri, Hashem Samarji, Manifesto: *Toward a New Vision*, (1969). English translation in Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers, Nada Shabbout (eds.), *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents* (2018), The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Against that background,[25] attempts to integrate this community into rigid schemes of integration policy is hardly a relevant intervention. The narrative of the expert reading panels covers various aspects of their lives. Different experts attach more or less importance to these aspects. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus on what the community is aspiring for: real equality of opportunity and a partnership of equals with the established cultural sector and arts scene in the EU. Another general conclusion is that going 'back to normal' (in the sense of restoring the order before the Covid-19 pandemic) means going back to the narrative presented above, which is not an option for the community.

The remaining question is: what can be done at EU level to contribute to a paradigm shift?

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25   That is not to say that the community necessarily adheres to the vision provided in *Manifesto: Toward a New Vision*; it is rather the attitude that is similar.

4. Some conclusions and recommendations

Firstly, in the search for possible action at EU level, two general facets of the SWANA community of artists and cultural workers need to be taken into consideration. These are: [26]

a) the community is very diverse even in terms of legal status and types of residency permit

b) mobility is essential for the community as it is primarily rooted in transnationalism rather than specific geographies.[27]

This implies that any meaningful future EU action needs to be tailored in a way that benefits the whole community. In other words, such action risks not being beneficial if it replicates the narrow approach used in national integration policies exclusively focusing on migrants or geographical definitions.

Secondly, both culture and integration are policy areas that fall under national competence. This is not to say that action on the EU level is not possible at all. However, where the EU lacks competence, its actions normally involve no direct interventions in the Member States. Instead, the EU institutions normally offer complementarity and cooperation with the Member States. One illustrative example is the recent resolution of the European Parliament[28] advocating for a European framework on working conditions

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26 Both these features have been pinpointed by the expert reading panels, as well as being confirmed by a recent study by the Belgian arts organisation Mophradat (see: Nadia Cherif, *Transnationals: Who are They and What do They Want?* (2021), available at: https://mophradat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/27NOV2021-Nadia-Cherif-booklet-ENGLISH-pages.pdf

27 It should also be emphasised that mobility between Europe and the countries of origin goes in both directions.

28 This refers to the European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0430_EN.html

for the cultural and creative sectors. As Polivtseva (2021) correctly remarks,[29] the response of the European Commission[30] was to remind the Parliament of its limited competence in this area and refer to the existing tools at the disposal of the EU, where culture is concerned. This means that advocacy efforts to benefit the community need to be realistic to have the potential to bring about real change.

Thirdly, it is difficult to propose EU actions that specifically target a community defined in terms of its origins (as in SWANA). Legally speaking, such actions run a high risk of being interpreted as targeting a community defined in terms of its race or ethnicity. Direct EU action aimed at benefiting a specific demographic group is a rarity under the EU legal regime. One illustrative exception is the EU Roma strategic framework. However, the strategic plan of the framework[31] is built on recommendations to the Member States and an offer to co-operate rather than direct intervention in line with the limits of the competence of the EU as discussed above. Furthermore, the Roma community was prioritised by the EU for several reasons, one of which is the urgently devastating living conditions of the community, where they are often denied the most basic rights across the Union. When it comes to SWANA artists and cultural workers, the issue at stake is diametrically different. The concerned community here is a highly educated, skilled and productive force.

The general conclusion is that areas of advocacy for EU action to improve the situation of SWANA artists and cultural workers can be shaped by two approaches:

- **A corrective approach:** advocacy for action that challenges recognised existing inequalities and indirectly targets the specific issues raised by the community

- **A proactive approach:** advocacy for action that ensures that any future or further action does not reinforce or reproduce entrenched inequalities.

In terms of available instruments at EU level, the traditional instruments for culture are already used for advocacy by CAE. However, it is worth exploring the possibilities that

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29 Elena Polivsteva, *A Ray of Hope for Arts and Cultural Workers* (2021) (available at: https://socialeurope.eu/a-ray-of-hope-for-arts-and-cultural-workers)

30 In the Resolution on the cultural recovery of Europe (2020/2708(RSP)) (available at: https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure do?lang=en&reference=2020/2708(RSP)

31 See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813

come with the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027).[32] Even though the plan is based on the same approach (recommendations for the Member States and offers to co-operate), it is fairly extensive and based on the notion of equality.

A corrective approach

A starting point for challenging inequalities can be a wider mapping of the issues raised by the community using the instruments at the disposal of the EU's institutions. Essential to such an analysis is the identification of those issues that seem to be arising across the Union to generate the incentive to handle it at EU level. This is a larger project that cannot be explored within the limits of this project. However, the list of issues that will be annexed to the technical report is a good start for such an analysis.

That said, some areas of action have been possible to identify through the process behind this report. These can be presented in the form of the recommendations which follow.

Recommendation 1: *the development of a European framework for recognition of documented and undocumented qualifications*

According to the expert reading panels, recognition of qualifications seems to be a challenge that runs across the Union. This resonates with "recognising skills" as a priority in the EU's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion. This is also in line with the Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning[33] that speaks of qualifications of third-country nationals and is thus not limited to migrants. Additionally, some work is already done in the framework of the Council of Europe and could be fed into the process at the EU level.[34]

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32 The full plan including planned measures for 2021-2027 is available at: https://ec.europa. eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and- inclusion-2021-2027_en

33 See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)

34 The relevant documents are: https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees- qualifications and this: https://www.enic-naric.net/recognise-qualifications-held-by-refugees. aspx (see 3 projects under point 1, Erasmus funding)

Recommendation 2: *the development of equality data for the cultural sector specifically*

Lack of visibility and tokenisation can be seen as two sides of the same coin and make up a challenge that is not limited to just a handful of Member States. Generally, equality has often been limited to gender due to the lack of disaggregated data in terms of other protected grounds in EU law. Historically, gender equality has been advanced by demanding disaggregated data and using it when available. Advocacy can be related to the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025[35] and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV).[36] The development of equality data is a priority in both documents. During the latest Roundtable on Equality Data (September 2021) [37], the EU Commission announced that it has carried out diversity monitoring within its organisation to promote its legality for Member States (this should be made public before the end of 2021).

Recommendation 3: *mapping issues with tools*

Using the list of issues that will be annexed to the technical report, it is possible to start mapping them at a larger scale. Alternatively, it is possible to limit further work to specific issues, if they are recognised as relevant to the whole Union. For a better understanding, a bottom-up perspective with a collaborative approach is useful. For such work, it is possible to consult or co-operate with organisations that have more extensive knowledge of the SWANA community. A few examples are mentioned by the expert reading panels: Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy)[38], Ettijahat, and Mophradat.[39] CAE has extensive experience of bottom-up approaches, while the Amplify[40] project is worth mentioning as a possible model in this respect.

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35 See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en

36 See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/cerv/wp-call/2022/call-fiche_cerv-2022-citizens-town_en.pdf

37 See post-event document at: https://roundtable-equality-data-2021.eu/documents/

38 Website: https://mawred.org/?lang=en

39 Website: https://mophradat.org/en/

40 See: https://cultureactioneurope.org/projects/amplify-make-the-future-of-europe-yours/

A proactive approach

A proactive approach can also be described as a 'promotional' approach. It is about promoting inclusivity, thus preventing further action from generating new challenges or reinforcing challenges that already face the community. Currently, culture seems to be on the political agenda more than ever. There are several actions on the EU level that either directly connect to culture or indirectly have consequences for the cultural field.

Recommendation 4: *follow up the European Parliament resolution on the situation of artists and cultural recovery in the EU*
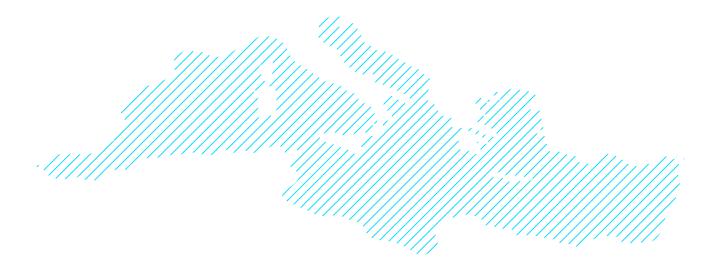
The above-mentioned European Parliament resolution covers several challenges to the narrative presented by the expert reading panels. One of the resolution's shortcomings is that equality is mentioned several times in the preamble, whereas the 45 recommendation points only reference gender equality. Even though the European Commission has made it clear that many of the proposals fall under the competence of each Member State, the resolution will most likely trigger some measures on the EU level, ideally with the Council of the EU being requested to take action to advance on the topic of a European Status of the Artist. Considering the narrative presented by the expert reading panels, any further measures that do not consider inequality in the cultural sector will most probably further deepen the gap between the SWANA community and its established peers. Following up on the possible actions and ensuring the equality perspective is considered should therefore be a priority.

Recommendation 5: *integrate the perspective of the SWANA community into EUNIC's work on international cultural relations*

The European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), a European network and member of CAE, is supporting a shift from 'cultural diplomacy' to 'international cultural relationships' on the EU level[41]. According to Dâmaso (2021), this would imply moving from a top-down, one-sided practice to a bottom-up, two-sided, collaborative

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41 See, for instance: https://www.eunicglobal.eu/news/cultural-relations-key-approaches-in-fragile-contexts-report-available

process.[42] Such a shift has the potential to promote the position of the transnationally rooted community of SWANA artists and cultural workers. Potentially, it could contribute to redefining the status of those artists and cultural workers who see temporary or permanent relocation as an act of resilience and allow them a wider role in a bottom-up driven process for international cultural relations between the EU and the SWANA region.

42 Mafalda Dâmaso, *EU International Cultural Relations: Redefining the Relationship between Culture and Diplomacy* (2021) (available at: https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/eu-international-cultural-relations-redefining-relationship-between-culture-and-diplomacy).

5. A final reflection

In 2004, the Council of the European Union issued the document Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU.[43] This reiterated that "integration policies are the primary responsibility of individual Member States rather than of the Union as a whole." The document stated that integration "implies respect for the basic values of the European Union" but did not mention equal opportunities.

In contrast, the current EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027) that was mentioned above, emphasises equality of opportunity. The plan is expanded in its scope to cover both "EU citizens of migrant background" and "third-country nationals." Some of the priorities are: "inclusion for all", "targeted and tailored support" and "partnerships with various integration stakeholders."

To a certain extent, the plan does not seem to replicate the narrow approach that national integration policies were criticised for. This shift of focus is not limited to integration policies. The current EU Commission is committed to achieving a Union of equality, introducing a Task Force on Equality that will work on mainstreaming equality into all EU policies.[44]

To summarise, the EU Commission has launched an ambitious project to put equality at the heart of all EU policies in the coming years. This has surely created a momentum for advocating equal rights and promoting tailored support for marginalised communities.

However, it is essential to recognise the limits of what can be achieved on the EU level. The Union is committed to combating social exclusion and discrimination, as well as promoting social justice and protection (Article 3, TEU). But the EU equality directives have often been criticised in academic literature for adopting a rather limited notion of equality of opportunity.

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43 Council of the European Union, Press Release - 2618th Council Meeting 14615/04 (Presse 321). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/common-basic-principles-immigrant-integration-policy-eu_en

44 For further information see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/dalli/announcements/union-equality-first-year-actions-and-achievements_en

One shortcoming that comes from this notion is that discrimination is elicited through comparison between individuals (often involving the construct of an 'assumed comparator,). As Fredman (2012) notes:[45]

> "Thus, the basic premise, namely that there exists a 'universal individual', is deeply deceptive. Instead, the apparently abstract comparator is clothed with the attributes of the dominant gender, culture, religion, ethnicity or sexuality."

As Schaar (1997) points out, the notion of equality of opportunity is rarely challenged:[46]

> "Of the many conceptions of equality that have emerged over time, the one that today enjoys the most popularity is equality of opportunity. The formula has few enemies – politicians, businessmen, social theorists, and freedom marchers all approve it – and it is rarely subjected to intellectual challenge."

Both these shortcomings in the notion of formal equality of opportunity are mirrored in the literature provided for the expert reading panels. Unless the proactive approach to advocacy suggested above is taken seriously, there is a risk that all future policies or actions will reproduce and reinforce already existent inequalities, despite being formally in line with the equal opportunities principle.

On the other hand, one of the major obstacles for the SWANA artists and cultural workers is their lack of representation in decision-making positions. This has far-reaching consequences for the visibility of the community, reproducing narrow and biased qualifications or eligibility criteria for accessing institutions and funding. Further work must recognise that this is hardly something to be changed by the force of EU actions.

Nonetheless, nothing prevents the arts scene and cultural sector from adopting another approach to inclusivity. Instead of formal equality of opportunity, substantial equality or equity might be a more suitable approach (at least outside the realm of labour law regulations).

All good work that can be done on the EU level risks having a limited effect on the community unless the arts and cultural scene accepts an intellectual challenge: to stop and ask itself: how come such a highly educated, skilled and productive community of artists and cultural workers is not represented in our highest decision making positions?

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45 Sandra Fredman, Discrimination Law 2nd ed. (2012), Oxford University Press, Oxford.

46 John Schaar, Equality of opportunity and beyond. In: Louis Pojman & Robert Westmoreland (eds.), Equality: Selected Readings (1997), Oxford University Press, New York

Biographies

Reem Abd Ulhamid
Independent journalist

Reem's work focuses primarily on writing and investigating minority groups and communities combating oppression and social injustice as well as gender issues. She has extensive experience working in newsrooms and evaluating digital content for various online platforms in Europe and the Arab world. A master's degree graduate in Global Communications from American University of Paris and holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Birzeit University in Palestine.

Nawar Alhusari
Practice-based artistic researcher

Coming from a background in Graphic art and theory, Nawar, currently a Ph.D candidate at the Bauhaus University Weimar (Germany), focuses on the socio-political change in the Middle East and its impacts on individuals from the area. Through artistic practice and theory, Nawar mainly deepens on a conceptual approach in questioning and discussing the studied topics.

Jumana Al-Yasiri
Arts manager

Paris-based, Damascus-born, independent arts manager and cultural consultant. For the past 20 years, she's curated and produced residencies, festivals, conferences, and artists support programs in the Arab region, Europe, and the United-States. Jumana is also a regular writer and panellist. Her research and publications deal with art and migration, the construction of identity in exile, postcolonial discourses in the arts, and the international representation of artists and cultural producers from the Arab region and the Global South.

Yamam Al-Zubaidi
He is an independent researcher, specialized in equality and diversity as well as cultural policy. He has extensive experience in Swedish and European equality law, including over 10 years of experience with the Swedish Equality Ombudsman.

He has also worked as the Equality and Diversity Manager at the National Theatre of Sweden. He is the author of the first Swedish National report on equality data. Yamam was the Swedish National expert in equality data within the working group "Equality data collection in the EU" (2015-2016) delivering expertise to the EU Commission. He is currently assigned as an expert position with the European Expert Network on Culture: The European Commission – DG Education and Culture (2021 –). He holds a Master of Arts in Decision, Risk and Policy Analysis (Stockholm University).

Ceyda Berk-Söderblom
Art manager, curator, festival programmer and entrepreneur

Helsinki-based award-winning art manager, curator, festival programmer and entrepreneur specialising in change management; and has 20 years of background experience in the arts. She has specialist knowledge in programming, curating, advocacy, lobbying, cultural branding, co-creation, fundraising, sponsorship, diversity, equity and inclusion management. She is the founder and artistic director of MiklagardArts, a facilitator and connector for promoting transnational collaborations. Her current non-profit work has been centred on public advocacy for equity, diversity, and inclusion within Finland's arts and culture sector, focusing on policies, practices, norms, and institutions.

Houari Bouchenak Khelladi
Researcher and curator

He places the human being and his environment, through trace and mobility, at the heart of his research and creative work. A member and co-founder of Collective 220 (http://www.collective220.net), he has acted as curator and mentor for several photography projects and artist residencies in Algeria, France and Spain. After obtaining a degree in industrial chemistry at the University of Tlemcen (Algeria), he continued his studies in cultural and intercultural project engineering at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne (France).

Marcin Górski

Professor of the Department of European Constitutional Law, University of Lodz (Poland), Dr. Habil. Juris, member of the Centre for Research on Migration Law, Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw, Poland), attorney-at-law, head of the Legal Department of the City of Lodz Local Government, author and co-author of some 170 articles, chapters and books on EU

law, international law, and human rights, including "Swoboda wypowiedzi artystycznej. Standardy międzynarodowe I krajowe" (Freedom of Artistic Expression. International and Domestic Standards), Wolters Kluwer 2019.

Eyad Houssami
Theatre maker and postgraduate researcher

Eyad makes theatre and has participated in the revitalization of an ancient organic farm in southern Lebanon. He is editor of the Arabic-English book *Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre* (Pluto Press/Dar Al Adab) and was editor-at-large of *Portal 9*, a bilingual literary and academic journal about urbanism. A Syrian multinational, he studied at Yale, earned a certificate in beekeeping from SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon, and is pursuing a PhD at the University of Leeds, with support from the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council.

Rana Issa
Researcher, cultural producer

She enjoys exploring the histories, theories and practices of translation. Her passion is to find the balancing point between public humanities, activist engagements and academic curiosity. She writes in a variety of genres and languages and has occupied leadership roles in various aspects of cultural production. She was the previous editor of Arabic and Translation in Rusted Radishes and is the artistic director of Masahat.no. She makes a living as a member of the faculty at the American University of Beirut and a Sr. Researcher at the University of Oslo. Her collaboration with Suneela Mubayi to translate 19th century author, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's travelogue to Europe, Tickets to Malta, London and Paris by the Remarkable received the National Endowment for the Arts award. Her book The Modern Arabic Bible us forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

Marie Le Sourd
Since 2012 she is the Secretary General of On the Move, the cultural mobility information network active in Europe and worldwide. Prior to this position, she worked in Singapore for the Asia-Europe Foundation (Cultural Department) from 1999 till 2006 and directed the French Cultural Centre in Yogyakarta-Indonesia from 2006 till 2011. Marie has over the years nurtured a knowledge pool on international cultural cooperation, funding schemes for the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, networks and web-resources. She is overall interested in the multiple impacts of mobility on artists and cultural professionals and evaluation process linked to these.

Rajae Mechkour
Cultural professional

Cultural professional from Morocco who began her journey as a cultural advocate in 2016, taking part in initiatives launched by culture civil society organizations in Rabat & Tangier. Rajae is now based on the other side of the Mediterranean, in Italy, where she is exploring the emergent challenges shared by Mediterranean youth broadly, and cultural practitioners specifically "

Meriem Mehadji
Consultant, researcher and teacher in cultural policies and diplomacy

Meriem is a doctor in international relations, specialising in cultural policies, soft power and cultural diplomacy in MENA countries. She is lecturer at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Internationales et Politiques (Paris), where she teaches amongst others, cultural policy, Arab-Muslim civilization and culture and Arabic languages. In addition to academic research and practice, she has participated, as scriptwriter, editor, translator and producer of several artistic works in the field of cinema and documentary in France, Algeria and the Gulf States.

Sepideh Rahaa
Multidisciplinary artist, researcher and educator

Her practice and research interests are representations in contemporary art, silenced histories, decolonisation, Intersectional feminist politics and post-migration matters. Her aim is to initiate methods through contemporary art practice to create spaces for dialogue. She seeks these interests through collaborative ongoing projects such as A Dream That Came True?. Her current doctoral research and work in Contemporary Art at Aalto University is funded by the Kone Foundation (Finland). Since 2015, Rahaa has been actively participating in debates and taking actions regarding the art politics in Finland by being a member at Third Space Collective (2015-), Globe Art Point (2016- currently vice chair) and Nordic Network for Norm Critical Leadership (2018-) among other collaborative projects. Rahaa holds a BA in Painting and Visual Arts and an MA in Art and Research from Shahed University of Tehran, and a second MA in Fine Arts and contemporary art at Aalto University. Her work has been exhibited and screened in Europe, East and West Asia.

Gabriele Rosana
He is a public policy enthusiast with experiences both in the institutions and in the not-for-profit environment. He is passionate about the EU political project and the

role that culture has to play there. During the 8th legislative term, he has worked for the Chair/Coordinator for a major political group of the CULT Committee in the European Parliament, and rapporteur for Creative Europe, extensively following the EU policy-making in the fields of culture, education, media, and digital. Before joining Culture Action Europe, he worked as Policy Executive for Fondation EURACTIV and as Advocacy Officer for the Association européenne des conservatoires (AEC). He holds an LL.M. in EU Law from the College of Europe in Bruges and is a freelance journalist covering EU and foreign affairs for various media outlets.

Fairooz Tamimi
Award winning novelist, journalist and entrepreneur

Originally from Jordan where she worked as the executive director of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) 2008-2010, and as The Jordan Film Fund Manager in The Royal Film Commission 2012-2013. Before that she worked in the IT and Telecom sector in national policy making and IT private sector. In 2013 she relocated to Sweden as an entrepreneur and cultural producer and founded the 'Immigrants Stand Up Comedy Network' in North Europe and co-founded 'The Nordic Network to Diversify Arts and Culture.' She founded two business accelerators for immigrant entrepreneurs and worked as the regional director for the Impact Investors Network 'Impact Invest Scandinavia'. Currently she works as Sustainability Specialist at Trans Europe Halles. She is the winner of 'Göran Tunhammar's Award for 'Openness and Diversity' 2016.

Amna Walayat
Visual artist

Cork-based Pakistani-born visual artist. Amna is interested in promoting South Asian identity and currently working on Community Museum of South Asia as a Creative Producer in Residence with Cork County Council, Ireland. Amna has an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art History from UCC, and an MA in Fine Arts from Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.