

## SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVE WORKING GROUP – MEETING MINUTES

<b>Meeting Number</b>	05
<b>Date</b>	20/05/2025
<b>Time</b>	09:30 – 11:30hrs
<b>Venue</b>	Arts Council Malta Offices, Mrieħel
<b>ACM</b>	Adrian Debattista, HoS ACM Mary Ann Cauchi, COO (F&S) (ACM)
<b>PCOs</b>	Rupert Cefai, AD SK Christabel Borg Preca, OD NAPA
<b>Present Members</b>	Alex Bezzina Kristina Borg Charlie Cauchi, MPA Maria Galea, MEIA Lisa Gwen Chetcuti, Diane Portelli
<b>Excused</b>	Moira
<b>Absent</b>	
<b>Co-Chairs</b>	Adrian Debattista / Mary Ann Cauchi & Moira Zahra
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Charlie Cauchi, MPA

Agenda Item		Action
1.	<p><b>Approval of Minutes</b></p>	Minutes approved
2.	<p><b>Article on the PGIS on Regional Cultural Assets Project</b></p> <p>Discussion on Press Coverage: The meeting addressed concerns regarding an article about the project in the press. The discussion highlighted that the article did not adequately define the scope of the project.</p> <p>Response from Communications: Adrian engaged with the communications team regarding the article and the broader use of the term “heritage” as a catch-all phrase.</p> <p>Conceptual Clarifications: There was a conversation about the definition of heritage and cultural assets within the project context. It was noted that these concepts might be challenging and that the term “cultural assets” is not universally understood. Expanding the definition of heritage may help address this issue.</p> <p>Adrian acknowledged the concern but emphasised that this was the first time the project was publicised to the public. He outlined the broader context and assured that future press releases issued by ACM regarding the project would aim to highlight key nuances more effectively.</p>	Future press releases issued by ACM regarding the project would aim to highlight key nuances more effectively.
3.	<p><b>Updates on the Regional Cultural Strategies (proposed by MEIA, intervention to be initiated by ACM)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACM provides information on the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structured as a cultural inventory, utilising a Participatory GIS (PGIS) approach, placing the regions at the center of the initiative. The participatory nature of the approach, despite its competitive nature, has proven to be a motivating factor for stakeholders.</li> <li>○ ACM explains that initial data collection has commenced to assess existing cultural assets; however, challenges persist regarding data integration, data sharing, knowledge sharing,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Continue addressing challenges related to data integration, knowledge sharing, and skills exchange in the project.

	<p>and skills sharing. These issues are actively being addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The project aims to engage stakeholders with direct community ties, ensuring meaningful impact on residents.</li> <li>○ Outreach efforts primarily target community engagement, fostering participation and local ownership of cultural assets.</li> <li>○ ACM is working closely with Dr. Wendy Jo Mifsud to finalise the project’s mapping component. The expected outcome will be highly visual, including a physical map complemented by an interactive online digital map that will evolve through participatory engagement.</li> <li>○ Once data implementation begins, it will be contestable, ensuring adaptability and inclusivity.</li> <li>○ Regional councils are expected to contribute by integrating event calendars into the mapping framework.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ACM also raises the Regional Cultural Cooperation Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Regional Cultural Cooperation Fund, launched in 2024, specifically targeted regional councils, with four out of six regions benefiting from the initiative.</li> <li>○ The fund will relaunch in July 2025, preceded by an online information session in June to provide guidance for applicants.</li> <li>○ Artists, creatives, and practitioners interested in submitting proposals can express interest in multiple regions, fostering wider engagement across different communities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Several points were raised regarding Regional Cultural Managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Diane inquired about the existence of a formal engagement system, which was confirmed as operating at each region’s discretion. Kristina noted that the structure is comparable to the Culture Pass initiative, where artists liaise directly with the region rather than individual councils.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>ACM to expand engagement with tangible stakeholders directly tied to communities.</p> <p>Finalization of the visual mapping component and ensuring the online digital map is structured for participatory engagement and contestability.</p> <p>Regional Cultural Cooperation Fund Implementation.</p> <p>Launch the second round in July 2025, with an info session in June 2025.</p> <p>ACM will send information to the SRWG about the June info session regarding the Regional Cultural Cooperation Fund.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maria asked whether each region retains a cultural manager, which was confirmed. However, ACM explained that despite the formal obligation, some regions opt not to appoint one.</li> <li>○ The fund remains region-focused rather than council-specific.</li> <li>○ Discussion explored why some regions hesitate to appoint cultural managers, acknowledging multiple complex influencing factors.</li> <li>○ Lisa and Maria highlighted challenges cultural managers face, particularly regarding programme time constraints and probation periods, which complicate project implementation.</li> <li>○ Concerns were raised that local councils may prioritize political interests over collective community benefits, impacting cultural initiatives.</li> <li>○ Adrian clarified that the Regional Strategy is developed in collaboration with the Diviżjoni Lokali tal-Gvern (Local Government Division - DLG), under which regional councils operate, with Arts Council Malta (ACM) actively involved.</li> <li>○ Mary Ann observed positive shifts in regional cultural engagement, noting that the fund has encouraged councils to appreciate the value of cultural managers, resulting in reduced resistance to their inclusion.</li> <li>○ Kristina emphasized the importance of acknowledging that the conceptual framework of the local, regional, and national is a relatively recent development within the Maltese context. Her observation prompted a broader discussion among the participants regarding the historical and cultural evolution of these spatial and political identities in Malta.</li> </ul>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Fair Remuneration and the Current Funding Structure</b>  <b>Presenter: Kristina</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kristina opened her presentation by highlighting two primary focus areas: fair remuneration and the current funding structure. She noted the challenge of addressing both topics comprehensively within the limited</li> </ul>	<p>Mapping both the visible and invisible labour involved in various artistic forms.</p>

timeframe. Her reflections were informed by recurring concerns and challenges shared by various artists and practitioners, emphasizing identifying actionable steps.

### **1. Fair Remuneration**

- Kristina began by examining how fair remuneration is linked to the principles outlined in the Charter for the Status of the Artist.
- She questioned what current conditions enable or hinder fair remuneration for creative practitioners.
- A key concern raised was the lack of sufficient funding to support fair pay, despite funding guidelines requiring applicants to address how their project aligns with the Charter. This creates ambiguity: if funding levels remain static, how can artists realistically ensure fair remuneration?

### **2. Visible and Invisible Labour**

- Kristina emphasised the need to map both visible and invisible labour in artistic practices.
- She provided the example of delivering a workshop, which includes preparation, research, planning, and post-event processing—often unaccounted for in remuneration.
- As a potential action point, she proposed developing a framework to map these labour components across different practices.

### **3. International Models**

- Kristina referenced a tool used in the Netherlands: an online calculator that recommends a minimum artistic fee based on specific criteria.
- Lisa inquired whether this tool includes curatorial practices. Kristina responded that she would share the resource with the group and suggested it could serve as a model for further exploration.

### **4. Sectoral Disparities**

- Kristina noted a hierarchy in fee structures within the sector. While service providers are typically accounted

Emphasis was placed on the need to engage in a deep, vertical exploration of artistic practices to gain a comprehensive understanding of the processes involved.

Facilitate the assignment of tangible value to artistic work, thereby enabling practitioners to better articulate and justify the economic worth of their contributions.

Investigate alternative funding models that better support fair remuneration.

Continue gathering data to support advocacy for structural change in funding and remuneration policies.

The next meeting to focus on a more holistic approach to the

for in budgets, artistic work is often undervalued, leaving artists at a disadvantage.

- Rupert added that there are no binding obligations to ensure fair pay in the cultural sector, unlike in the private sector, where remuneration standards are more rigorously upheld.
- Maria referenced ongoing research by MEIA, revealing that the average performing artist earns approximately €4 per hour, with dancers being the most underpaid.
- Diane highlighted the lack of distinction between professional and amateur performances in funding structures. A standard cap of €5,000 (including VAT) is applied regardless of the production's scale or professionalism.

#### **6. Procurement and Regulation**

- The discussion concluded with concerns about the complexities of direct orders and procurement systems.
- It was noted that attempts to circumvent regulations often result in harm to artistic practice, further complicating fair remuneration efforts.
- It was noted that direct orders are often associated with inevitable misjudgements and stigma in the public domain. It is highlighted that such mechanisms should not always be taken at face value, as they often involve hidden or indirect costs, which complicate the perception and evaluation of direct orders and should be considered when assessing the fairness and feasibility of remuneration structures.

#### **7. Transparency in Rates and Market Dynamics**

- The group discussed the issue of supply and demand within the cultural and creative sectors. It was noted that many practitioners are reluctant or fearful to openly discuss their rates, contributing to a lack of transparency and perpetuating inequities in remuneration. This silence around fees makes it difficult to establish fair benchmarks and reinforces a culture where the undervaluation of artistic labour persists.

#### **9. Budget Prioritisation and Artistic Fees**

funding system, which also considers evaluation and monitoring support.

- It was observed that artistic fees often fall last in the budget hierarchy. After covering essential production costs, there is frequently little left to allocate to the artists themselves. This budgeting structure reinforces the undervaluation of artistic labour and highlights the need for funding models that prioritise fair remuneration from the outset.
- Mary-Ann raised concerns about institutions setting standardised fees, suggesting it would be inappropriate for an institution to dictate rates. Kristina clarified that this was not the intention of the discussion. Rupert added that government entities currently operate without any binding regulations requiring artists to be paid a fair rate, though such a standard should exist.
- Kristina emphasised that many practitioners are highly trained professionals who deserve more than minimum compensation. She stressed the need to recognise their expertise and qualifications in remuneration discussions.
- Kristina highlighted that the absence of clear, sector-wide guidelines makes it difficult to create a standard hourly rate, highlighting a gap that needs to be addressed to ensure fair and consistent pay practices. Artist should be trained to know how to value their practice.
- Maria informed the group that MEIA is currently developing a rate card for the performing arts. She explained that this is a complex and multi-phase process, consisting of a position paper, a consultation phase, the drafting of guidelines based on the consultation outcomes, and finalisation of the rate card. She emphasised that while the process is thorough and necessary, it is also time-consuming and requires careful coordination to ensure sector-wide relevance and acceptance.
- Rupert emphasised the critical lack of a clear economic model of those working in the sector, identifying it as a significant challenge.
- Diane highlighted inconsistencies in artist remuneration, noting that higher rates are often reserved for international artists over equally experienced local talent.
- Maria proposed a joint initiative between MEIA and ACM to develop a shared Code of Practice.

- Christabel, representing PCO NAPA, shared their decade-long effort to improve dancer fees and their current focus on actor compensation.
- While some raised concerns about potential drawbacks of a rate card, Maria clarified it should serve as a guideline rather than a mandate.
- Lisa stressed the importance of grounding the guide in skills and experience. Others added that private companies may struggle to meet the recommended rates and that the broader cultural ecosystem must be taken into account. Adrian described the guide as a form of "soft power."
- Lisa brought up the ACM Apprentice scheme. While acknowledging the importance of the scheme, she critiqued it for compensating apprentices without supporting mentors, who invest time and expertise without receiving remuneration. Diane agreed, adding that the reporting requirements are also burdensome. Adrian acknowledged this as a valid concern for future consideration.
- Maria questioned the absence of a longer-term support mechanism, such as one through Jobs Plus, to enhance sustainability, with more support for creative enterprises, not just NGOs.
- Kristina stated that in the next meeting, the focus should be on a more holistic approach to the funding, which also considers evaluation and monitoring support.

#### **10. Tax Update**

- Mary-Ann confirmed that the 7.5% reduced tax rate for creative practitioners is now active and will apply to income earned in 2024, to be submitted in the 2025 tax return. The legal framework for the 2025 tax year is currently being drafted.
- ACM has proposed a vetting process for applicants based on portfolio assessment, rather than relying on NACE codes.
- Applications must include a certified letter from a warranted professional to validate eligibility.

5.	<p><b>Meeting wrapped up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group agreed to explore funding structures in greater depth during the next session, allowing Kristina to continue her intervention.</li> </ul>	
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<b>Next Meeting Number</b>	6
<b>Date</b>	24 June 2025
<b>Time</b>	09:30 – 11:30hrs
<b>Venue</b>	ACM