

EDN

European
Dance Development
Network

EDN Think-in
June 2025

MOVING TOGETHER

*Dance, Care,
Freedom &
Cultural Rights
in Europe*



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Summary

On 3–4 June 2025, the European Dance Development Network (EDN) and Lavanderia a Vapore hosted a two-day **Think-in**, convening 90 dance and cross-sector professionals in a collaborative workshop in Collegno (Turin), Italy.

Participants attested to how dance can serve as **public infrastructure**, **a cultural right**, and **a civic practice**. The collective outcome? A meaningful combination of lived insight, policy direction, and creative strategy.

Performing Arts Coalition

The Think-in event contributes to the Performing Arts Coalition's initiative on The Right to Engage with the Performing Arts in Today's Europe & Beyond. Led by five European networks—ASSITEJ, Circostrada, EDN, EFA, and IETM.

This joint effort aims to map the evolving political, social, and technological conditions that impact **access to culture** and **artistic freedom** in the performing arts.

Why This Matters

- The impact of dance arts is driven by **individual and societal urgencies**, and it extends from rehearsal studios into schools, care homes, public spaces, and domains of social justice.
- **Cultural participation** and **artistic freedom** must be guaranteed as **rights**, not privileges.
- **Contemporary dance culture** is not being created equal. This highly innovative, mobile, and internationalised artistic environment suffers from poor working conditions, short-sighted support, institutional rigidity, and exclusionary practices.



Key Barriers and Threats

→ Economic and Structural Constraints

The lack of accessible infrastructure and undervalued work prevent both organisations and artists from sustaining inclusive, community-rooted projects and cross-sectoral collaborations.

→ Rigid Institutional Models

Competitive environments and hierarchical institutions limit participation, experimentation, and shared authorship.

→ Exclusive Spaces and Practices

When confined to formal, institutional settings, dance arts can become physically, socially, or psychologically uninviting or inaccessible.

→ Systemic Exclusion and Undervaluation

Non-Western, community-based, or diasporic forms are often not recognised as legitimate cultural and artistic practices by decision makers.

Emerging Practices and Innovations

→ Radical Hospitality

Inclusive practices emphasise care, rest, nourishment, and emotional safety, offering new models for welcoming participation across differences.

→ Building Trust

Long-term, informal, and repeated engagement with communities allows for genuine and meaningful relationships.

→ Cross-Sector Embodied Knowledge

Partnerships with care institutions, education, sports, activists, community work, and digital cultures reposition dance arts as an integral part of broader, embodied life.

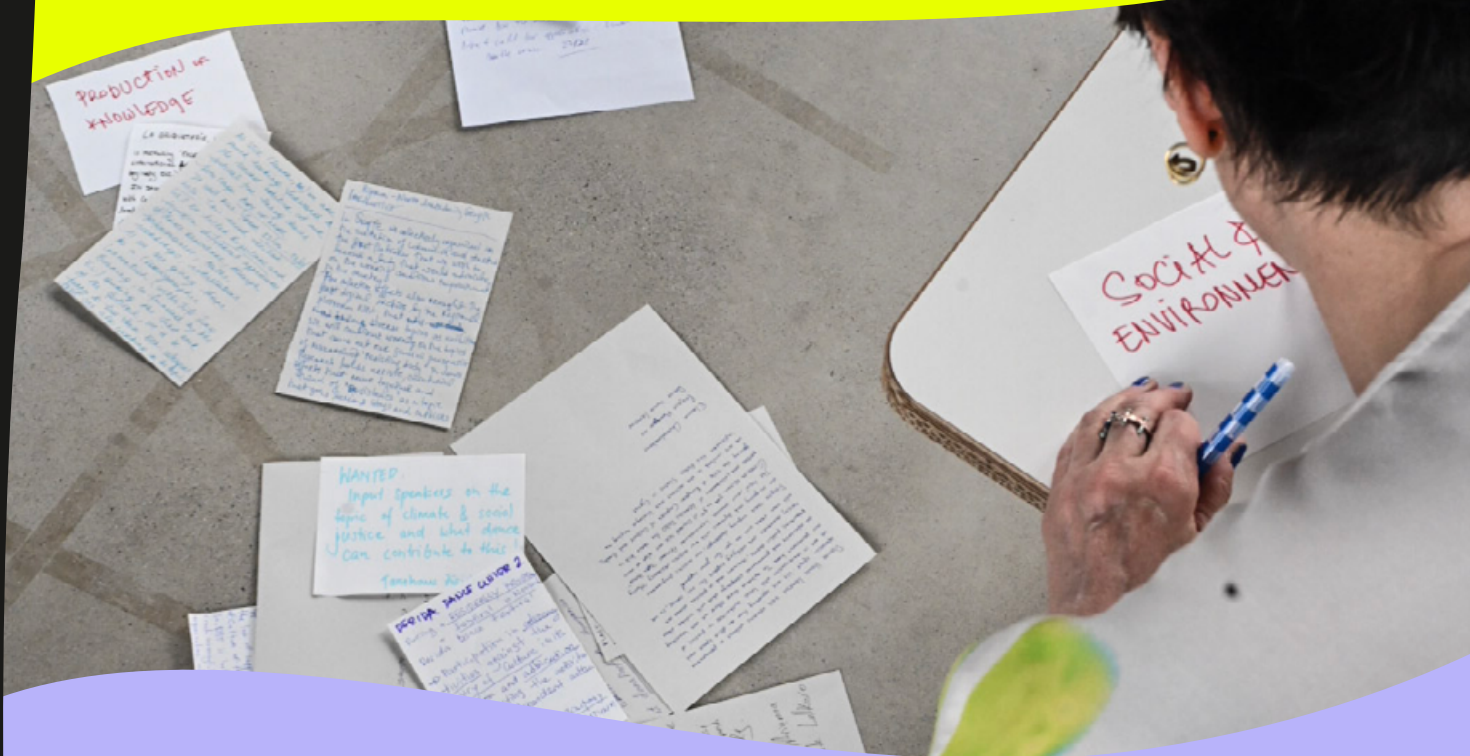
→ Community-Led Programming and Facilitation

Models that prioritise guidance, listening, and co-creation (especially for first-time participants and marginalised groups) enable transformative access.

Unexpected Experts

The Think-in held space for transformative experiences with dance arts as recounted by **care workers, educators, activists, and community leaders.**

These exchanges positioned dance as a relational practice and civic tool, opening dialogue, reimagining roles, and challenging institutions to engage with care-based, participatory approaches to **cultural access.**



Voices from the Room

"There is something about experiencing dance with strangers. You learn to trust. Or at least, to loosen the grip a little."

"We need more places where people are looked at fully. Not just managed."

"A kind of shared attention ... that wasn't outreach. It was an opening."

The quiet power of dance lies precisely in its refusal to solidify. Instead, it lingers. It ripples. Someone connects more easily, or touches less fearfully, or learns to live with unpredictability.

That was a collective recognition that dance—messy, unruly, bodily encounters—offers the possibility to cultivate our presence. Not just for the stage, but for life. For being in it, with others.

A Holistic Approach to Mediation

The field of contemporary dance is chronically overworked and underfunded. Implementing **accessibility programmes** on top of a dance organisation's core mission is often not feasible. The case of Tanzhaus Zürich shows how accessibility can be embedded into an organisation's DNA **when shaped through dialogue with policy**, rather than imposed by top-down funding requirements.

The new Zürich funding model, launched in 2024, is the result of a broad consultation process. It aims to bridge permanent institutional funding and concept-based flexible financing, while also addressing gaps in youth programming.

Included in Zürich's cultural policy reform were:

- **Permanent funding** for institutions to distribute co-production support directly to artistic communities.
- **Concept-based funding** for institutions (6-year terms) and artists (2–4-year terms).
- **Production Office** provides production management support to relieve artists of administrative tasks. It includes an advisory, networking, and training platform.
- **Uncurated Spaces** offer low-barrier access to rehearsal and initial presentation opportunities for emerging artists by activating interim spaces or venues outside the concept funding system.
- A new **Children & Youth Dance and Theatre House** to reach underserved audiences.



Tanzhaus Zürich is responsible for allocating public concept-based funding directly to the artistic community. This **direct distribution model** fosters closer, more equitable relationships with artists and co-producing partners.

The organisation approaches **mediation as a holistic and embodied attitude** across all areas: from architecture and programming to teamwork and public engagement. By focusing solely on artistic projects and productions, Tanzhaus Zürich addresses broader societal urgencies, such as climate change, social justice, and education, through **choreographic thinking** and **cross-sector collaboration**.

- **Design as invitation:** The building itself feels inviting to the public, thanks to its location, visibility, café, and open studios.
- **Accomplices model:** Artistic collaboration is value-driven, not outcome-driven.
- **Production cycles** are slowed down to prioritise research, forming partnerships, workshops, and discursive formats with audiences.
- **Integrated team culture:** The entire administrative team shares in the artistic process for a deeper understanding and alignment.
- **Educational commitment:** Long-term partnerships with city and regional education departments integrate dance into school curricula.
- **Institutional culture shift:** Embodied practices include dancing before meetings or co-creating strategy papers through movement.



Policy Wishlist

This policy wishlist emerges from the belief that dance as a **cultural right**, **civic practice**, and **public good** deserves **structural support** that reflects its full societal value. Inspired by insights from the field, it outlines actionable steps to shift from a **scarcity-driven system** toward one rooted in equity, sustainability, and artistic freedom.

These recommendations are not about **doing more with less**, but about embedding dance more deeply into policy, education, and public life, while **recognising artists as essential workers** in a shared cultural space.

Legislate Cultural Rights and Artistic Freedom

Establish cultural participation and artistic expression as protected rights across the EU and national frameworks (e.g. The Bratislava Declaration).

Complementary and Sustainable Funding

Develop multi-year, accessible funding schemes that support community-led, participatory, and cross-cultural practices (e.g. extended subsidy cycles by the Dutch Council for Culture).

Transform Institutions and Infrastructure

Redistribute power to make cultural spaces more porous, responsive, and community-rooted (e.g. Zurich's Cultural Policy Reform).

Better Living & Working Conditions

Improving working conditions for artists and cultural workers is essential to empower experimentation, co-creation, and social justice.

Enhance the Societal Value of the Arts

Strengthen public recognition of the arts by formally establishing the status of the artist, including measures such as universal basic service (e.g. Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts).

Expand Definitions of Dance Arts

Recognise diverse embodied practices, such as community-engaged dance, clubbing, and cultural dance forms, as part of contemporary choreographic arts.

Integrate Dance Arts in Education and Outreach

Embed inclusive movement practices in general education, early childhood development, and cultural outreach. (e.g. Spain's dance-in-education programme).

What Now

To strengthen cultural rights and artistic freedom across Europe, cultural policy must move beyond inclusion as a goal and toward **radical redesign** of systems, values, and infrastructures.

A future of dance that is porous, joyful, interdependent, and rooted in lived experience is already being practised today.



MEMBERS' OPEN SPACE

Young Working Group

EDN's Young Working Group will hold its first Atelier in Rovereto, Italy, in November 2025. The focus will be on **intergenerational governance in rural settings**, with young artists, curators, and dance professionals engaging in exchange around community-engaged practices for empowering youth and emerging artists.

Political Issues & Advocacy

Across Europe, dance faces serious political and structural challenges. In the UK, the Centre for Advanced Dance Training has recently been saved from outreach cuts after intense campaigning. Slovakia is facing censorship and funding cuts, while local governments are coordinating EU projects to mitigate the losses. Bulgaria is advocating for stronger recognition of its independent sector, and North Macedonia has mobilised for improved working conditions, creating a first digital dance archive. Similar pressures are rising across Europe: in Finland, grants for individual artists were cut by 40%, and in Cyprus, advocacy focuses on shaping new legislation on artists' status. Underfunding and censorship in Hungary are causing artists to emigrate, while **across Europe, the lack of dedicated dance infrastructure brings about the tendency for dance programmes to be the first cut when interdisciplinary arts centres come under financial strain.**

The EDN Atelier workshop in Lyon will focus on effective **advocacy strategies**, the political recognition of dance, and how movement-based practices can become powerful tools for social and political change.

Ongoing Violence

EDN member organisations reflected on how the network can support its members in navigating the conflicts and tensions arising from the war in Palestine, and explore ways of addressing the impact of the ongoing violence on their artistic communities and work environments.



Social & Environmental Justice

Members discussed how dance can contribute to climate and social justice, gathering input on relevant speakers and designing a symposium on ecological practices. The aim is to develop new collective strategies for resilience and sustainability in uncertain futures.

Artistic Collaborations

A wide range of new collaboration models is emerging. Artist development initiatives include mentorships, disabled artists programmes, and long-term support for choreographers. Co-creation and dance mediation are gaining ground, and institutions are shifting from project-based collaboration to sustained engagement with artists' broader trajectories. Remote access is being addressed through initiatives that bring performances to isolated areas via VR. New participatory funding approaches are also being tested, giving applicants collective decision-making power over resource distribution.

Research, Knowledge Production & Archiving

Research and documentation are increasingly central. A new study on working conditions and the dance market is underway in Ireland, while in France, efforts are being made to create an international network for dance publications. Archiving has become a funding requirement in some contexts, but challenges persist in capturing knowledge produced by residencies, education, and community practices. There is a recognised gap between academic research and practice, with calls to link artistic, theoretical, and academic environments. Documentation initiatives, such as living archives, self-publication, and videotheques, aim to better disseminate creative processes and their impacts.

Infrastructures & Organisational Change

New venues such as Sadler's Wells East in London and Dansehallerne in Denmark highlight ongoing investments in dance infrastructure in these contexts. Nordic countries are strengthening touring networks through national and regional partnerships. Institutions are testing more sustainable, hybrid practices to reintegrate dance into social contexts. In the Netherlands, extending national dance funding from four to eight years raises questions about the roles of institutions and opportunities for emerging artists. In response to funding cuts elsewhere, organisations are prioritising fundraising, residencies, and production support to help sustain the sector.



Get Engaged

- Save the date for EDN's online event of the year on 5 December 2025, where voices from across the dance field unite to shape the future of the sector.
- Stay tuned by subscribing to EDN's newsletter.



Attribution

This report is brought to you by Embodied Transformations, EDN's EU-funded network project. It connects contemporary dance professionals, organisations, and communities across Europe to foster a transformative and interdependent dance ecosystem.

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