

**E D N**

**Fit for the Future**



# Global Dance

EDN's Work Across Borders



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### About the author

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PhD, researcher, lecturer and consultant in the field of cultural policies and advocacy; international cooperation and mobility; and professional development in culture and the arts. Throughout over 20 years of experience, she has worked with European cultural networks, independent theatre companies and festivals, private entities, public institutions as well as European, national and regional authorities in Europe and the Mediterranean area. In parallel, she has developed a series of publications and academic writings. She is presently professeure associée at the University Paris 8, Institute of European studies where she teaches European policies and project development in culture and the arts.

#### Cristina Farinha

Independent policy expert and researcher specialised in heritage, culture and the creative industries. She has worked extensively in the last 25 years, from local and regional to international level in the conception, implementation, and evaluation of diverse policies, projects and organisations. PhD in Sociology, she has been also lecturing in the field of creative industries, cultural management and internationalisation. Her areas of work specialisation are the role of culture and creativity in governance and development; the promotion of international cooperation and mobility; and the building of capacity, advocacy and entrepreneurship within the sector operators.

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## FOREWORD

Because of its transnational history, education and practice, the dance field has always nourished international relations and dance ecosystems are strongly interconnected. Mirroring the practices of many dance stakeholders, the European Dancehouse Network (EDN) has embraced an international perspective by cultivating relationships with artists and contemporary dance professionals outside of Europe.

EDN members have a long tradition in reaching out to as well as supporting a variety of players across the world: from hosting residencies to commissioning and presenting international works, facilitating the circulation of knowledge and documentation to contributing to reinforcing a global artistic community with skills and opportunities.

Long before the Covid-19 crisis, through regular international relations, formal and informal collaborations, the European dance field has been exchanging continuously with international artistic communities and together addressed key sustainable issues such as fairer global ecosystems, greener approaches in relation to cultural mobility and key conditions for more inclusive, accessible and equal exchanges.

However, the current crisis accentuated the strong imbalances within European countries as well as between Europe and many international contexts, and had dramatic impacts on the situation of the dance field. The crisis emphasises structural weaknesses at global level, lack of recognition of the art form, the worrying working conditions of artists and dance professionals among other issues.

These past years, interesting policy development took place at European level and lead to raise the awareness of cultural exchanges between Europe and the rest of the world. As part of its 'Fit for the Future' series of publications, EDN commissioned researchers Fanny Bouquerel and Cristina Farinha to investigate the key conditions for more sustainable international relations in the dance field and how dance could contribute to EU's external relations. This first overview builds upon the various existing studies carried out by colleague organisations as well as the many conversation happening in the dance field, and draw recommendations for public authorities and the dance sector.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Yohann Floch *Secretary General (Feb - July 2021)*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review aims at contributing to explore how the dance field reflects and engages at the international level nowadays. This international action is illustrated by the European Dance Network's (EDN) work across borders and is inscribed within ongoing EU and international policy agendas.

Indeed, over the past decade, a range of civil society and political initiatives at the EU level have served to connect cultural work with international affairs. They include the two European Agendas for Culture published by the European Commission in 2007 and 2018, as well as the 2016 Communication on International Cultural Relations. Furthermore, international commitments derived from the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the UN 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have also emphasised how international cultural cooperation is relevant to the achievement of several European and global objectives.

The EDN defines itself as a 'European network active globally', and indeed it has been acting at a wide international scale, putting forward a multitude of actions across all continents since its very beginning. Activities realised in all continents mostly include: exploratory trips/encounters; participating or organising regional platforms for networking and mutual acknowledgement; atelier/residencies for artists, touring/artistic exchanges; design and implementation of projects taking place in Europe and beyond its borders.

These initiatives serve to illustrate how dance organisations have integrated international reflections in their work, and how international collaboration is an integral part of professional and institutional development in the field of dance. Evidence presented in this report draws on an analysis of initiatives implemented by EDN and its members in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa. A new set of interviews with representatives of EDN members has also been conducted, which serves to shed light, among others, on the underpinning reflections and challenges encountered, including those that result from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional references from contemporary literature on these matters is also included.

Following a general introduction to the arts and policy context, chapter II of the report addresses the factors that motivate artists and dance operators to engage in cultural relations and cooperation, and how this commitment is translated into practice. Elements identified in this area include the broadening and shifting of

individual and community perspectives, the connection with global challenges, the building of a global dance community, the development of professional careers, and the provision of inspiration, openness and diversity to local audiences.

Meanwhile, chapter III addresses the challenges and opportunities identified in the international dimension of dance. A range of factors in the artistic, digital, political, social, environmental and administrative domains are identified. While the Covid-19 pandemic has substantially opened opportunities for cross-border work online, this also raises questions concerning the digital divide (at home and abroad), the quality of collaboration, privacy and the need to find sustainable business models. Other challenges and relevant questions include how to find a right balance between local and international work, the ways in which dance may, or may not, foster more balanced global relations, the need to navigate simultaneously the environmental crisis and social inequalities, and administrative issues related to visas, among others. Supported by an array of quotes and examples, these pressing issues are explored in search of new ways ahead.

Finally, chapter IV puts forward a set of policy recommendations to encourage the international dimension of the dance scene, addressing the following issues:

- \* **Fostering a more sustainable and fairer dance community**, by, among others, acknowledging inequalities and finding ways to address them, and by seeking ways to reduce organisations' carbon footprint and fostering greener practices.
- \* **Envisaging mobility under a multiple and green approach**, which requires rethinking cooperation dynamics and formats inside and outside Europe and fostering more ethical, "fairer" approaches which allow interactions between territories and seek to mitigate inequalities and brain drain.
- \* **Promoting peer learning and developing capacities**, by strengthening capacity-building components based on peer-to-peer learning, enhancing skills related to innovation, investing in digital literacy at different levels, and revising dance and arts education curricula to make them more holistic and representative of current debates and trends.

\* **Developing research and a joint monitoring and evaluation approach**, through mapping, documentation and other forms of research, as well as by making monitoring and evaluation of sector activities and dynamics more structural and systematic.

\* **Developing tools and supporting intermediaries for the dance ecosystem as a contributor for international relations**, through the provision of specific incentives to enable the participation of dance agents in international activities, particularly for those who are underrepresented, by fostering dialogue and collaboration between the European Commission, EU Delegations in third countries and European cultural networks to capitalise on the latter's expertise and potential, and by taking advantage of how culture can be connected to health and well-being.

These general recommendations have specific implications for a range of stakeholders, including EU institutions, national, regional and local governments, European cultural networks such as the EDN, dance organisations and professionals, and other stakeholders related to the fields of dance and international relations.