



# SHIFT, SHAPE AND SHARE: AN EXPERIMENT IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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MED CULTURE PROGRAMME FINAL PUBLICATION

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# PREFACE

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This publication presents the Med Culture experience during its five years of operation. As well as addressing aspects of cultural development that the programme covered, it also shows how we – as the Technical Assistance Team – engaged with new trends and tools, and experimented with new methodologies in a bid to take the sector forward one big leap. Behind the serious work put into the programme, there was excitement, discovery, adventure, innovation – and lots of inspiration.

We invite you to read this document and become inspired yourselves for future capacity development in the sector.

## MEET THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM:

- Christiane Dabdoub Nasser, Team Leader
- Fanny Bouquerel, Capacity Development Expert
- Hiba Aboulhosn, Communication and Networking Expert
- Suhair Muhyealdeen, Communication and Networking Expert (2014-2016)

# THANKS TO

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The Team extends our thanks to DG NEAR, EAC, DEVCO, EEAS and the European Union Delegations in countries in the South Neighbourhood and also the experts, partners and supporters involved, including Members of the EU Parliament and their assistants and advisers. We most particularly wish to thank our colleague participants, who were core to the success of this programme. Last but not least, we thank all the stakeholders for trusting us in delivering this valuable programme. We hope that similar programmes will benefit from our shared experience and continue to promote culture in the region.



# NOTE FROM DG NEAR

Actions in the field of culture have key potential in building democratic societies and fostering economic and social development. Moreover intercultural relations have a significant impact in areas such as job creation and the development of creative industries; conflict prevention and peace-building as they reinforce dialogue between societies and strengthen freedom. These are all objectives of the external policies of the EU, including the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the South Mediterranean.

**Med Culture** has been a very successful regional project which has built lasting relations, opened discussions on shared regional topics, fostered cultural policy reform and reinforced the capacity of cultural policy makers. We are very thankful to the technical assistance team as well as the grantees for their achievements and we are hoping to build on their successful stories and lessons learnt in our future regional cultural programmes.

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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<b>DDD</b>	Drama, Diversity and Development
<b>DEVCO</b>	International Cooperation and Development
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>EAC</b>	Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUNIC</b>	European Union National Institutes for Culture
<b>NEAR</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations
<b>NFG</b>	National Focus Group
<b>P2P</b>	Peer to Peer
<b>South Med CV</b>	Working Together for the Public Value of Culture in the Southern Mediterranean
<b>Team</b>	Technical Assistance Team
<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This publication introduces the programme of work developed through the Technical Assistance Team for Med Culture during its five years of operation from January 2014 to March 2019.

It highlights the main axes of the work – governance and cultural policies; capacity development; and networking and communication – and presents the methodological approach used to achieve its underpinning aim. This was to develop institutional and social environments that affirm culture as a driver for freedom of expression and sustainable development, with a focus on young people as agents for change for more cohesive, resilient societies.

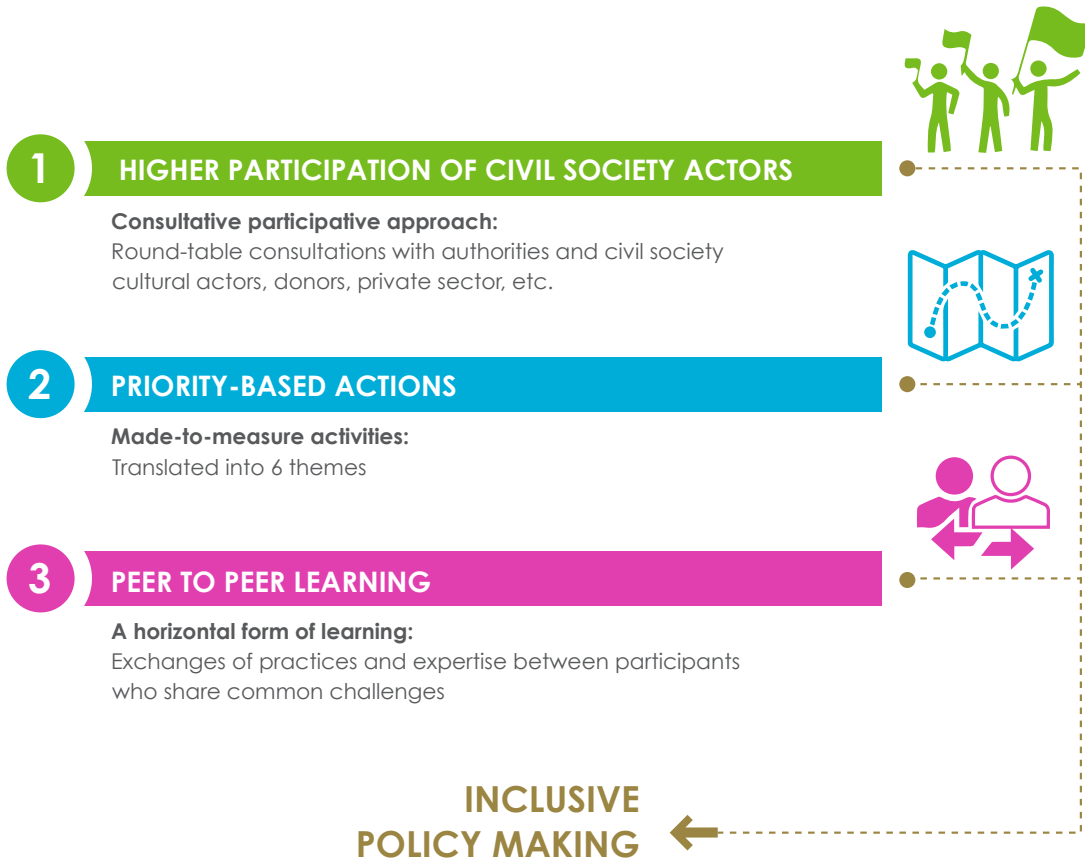
This methodology also supported the cross-cutting issues that are priorities within EU programmes, such as democratisation, gender equality, the environment etc. Activities were planned taking on board consultation outcomes and the identification of emerging needs, as well as information gleaned from research and studies commissioned by the Med Culture Team. The overall intent was to design a coherent and interconnected whole to achieve programme objectives more effectively.

Med Culture has confirmed the richness of the cultural scene in the South Neighbourhood and the potential it carries for the future development of societies. All those working in arts and culture, or in other sectors but using artistic forms as a medium, are living proof of the creativity and high level of engagement that characterise these sectors and help them achieve their goals, in spite of many challenges and frustrations.

It is through support for such highly committed and resilient operators that social and economic transformations will happen and radicalisation and marginalisation will diminish.

# MED CULTURE FACTSHEET 1/6

## METHODOLOGY



## MED CULTURE ACTION-BASED THEMES

POLICY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT	ADVOCACY AND CULTURE
RESILIENCE AND CULTURE	PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORK
CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYABILITY	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



# MED CULTURE FACTSHEET 2/6

## IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

with the support of  
**60 Short Term Experts**



### 3 Policy Peer to Peer (P2P) Workshops for better governance of the sector in:

- Higher education in cultural management and artistic disciplines
- Cultural policies and development of national strategies
- Promoting culture in the peripheries



**16 Peer to Peer and Thematic sessions**  
328 cultural practitioners



**6 Training Workshops**  
in project management:  
103 cultural practitioners



**2 Workshops** for the development of National Film Commissions  
• Lebanon • Tunisia  
46 cultural practitioners



**Focus on Youth:**  
Established a Regional Youth Group  
Houna aShabab  
22 cultural practitioners



**7 National Focus Groups**  
• Jordan • Morocco • Tunisia • Lebanon  
• Egypt • Palestine • Israel  
15 formal meetings



**7 ToT Workshops**  
Training of trainers  
205 participants



**1 Regional Platform**  
addressing higher education and employment in the cultural sector  
51 participants



**13 Open Calls**  
2251 applicants



**17 Consultative Meetings**  
• 8 with representatives of ministries  
• 9 with representatives of civil society



**2 National Consultative Workshops**  
• Jordan



**2 Regional Conferences**  
Opening conference on “Creativity and Culture for Development”  
• 141 cross sector participants and Conference on “Advocacy for Culture”  
• 101 participants at the **Med Culture Forum**



# MED CULTURE FACTSHEET 4/6

## DATA COLLECTION AND COMMISSIONED RESEARCH



### 6 THEMATIC STUDIES

- 1 Employability in the cultural and creative sectors in Arab Mediterranean countries: The case studies from of Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco
- 2 Higher Education and Training in Cultural management and Cultural Policies in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia
- 3 The Economic and Social Impacts of Culture: The Fès Festival of World Sacred Music
- 4 The Status of Higher Education, Vocational Training and Apprenticeships for Artistic Disciplines in Lebanon, Algeria and Palestine
- 5 Cultural Mobility Funding Guide - Focus on the Arab Region, including the MENA Region (in collaboration with On the Move)
- 6 Skills, Competences and Needs - Working in the Cultural Field in the Arab Region



### 4 PUBLICATIONS



- |                               |   |                             |   |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Manual for project management | Guidelines for Promoting Culture in the Peripheries | Mapping of online resources | Impact of the Med Culture programme (survey report) |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|



### 9 COUNTRY REPORTS AND OVERVIEW OF CULTURE INFOGRAPHICS

ALGERIA	JORDAN	MOROCCO
EGYPT	LEBANON	PALESTINE
ISRAEL	LIBYA	TUNISIA

# MED CULTURE FACTSHEET 5/6

## ONLINE 360° OVERVIEW OF CULTURE

in South Mediterranean countries and worldwide resources

### 90 RESOURCES

best practices, case studies, conventions, reports, networks, funds, etc.  
 • English and Arabic  
 until Jan 2019

### 427 NEWS

produced about worldwide opportunities  
 • English, French and Arabic  
 until Jan 2019

### 22 FEATURED

**STORIES** from the South  
 • English, French and Arabic  
 until Jan 2019

### 9 COUNTRY PROFILES

• first edition in 2016  
 • updated in 2018

### 9 COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFOGRAPHICS

illustrating facts and figures from the overview of the cultural sector country reports

### 46 E-NEWSLETTER

promoting opportunities and sharing activity related news, published reports, studies, and features  
 • 3,781 newsletter subscribers

### 778,849 WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS

• April 2015 - Jan 2019

### 263,802 WEBSITE NEW USERS

• April 2015 - Jan 2019

### 3 LANGUAGES

for a wider reach out

## SUB-GRANTS: DRAMA, DIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT



### 24 GRANTS MADE

• 13 street theatre • 10 advocacy • 1 film



### > 300 PERFORMANCES

across the region



### 87 INDIVIDUALS

• 36 women gained skills or capacity



### 9/13 STREET THEATRE GRANTEES

are known to be continuing similar work



### 29 DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS

• in 8 countries gained capacity



### STRONG REGIONAL NETWORK

of street theatre and cultural operators



### > 100,000 Audiences



### PERFORMANCES GENERATED

local or national debates on inclusion

# MED CULTURE FACTSHEET 6/6

## SUB-GRANTS: SOUTHMED CV

- 2 OPEN CALLS
- 29 PROJECTS
- **COACHING** OF BENEFICIARIES
- **VISIBILITY AND AWARENESS RAISING** ACTIVITIES
- **CAPACITY BUILDING AND MOBILITY** OF FUNDED PROJECTS: meetings in • Tunis • Beirut • Amman
- **NETWORKING** between all agents involved from different countries
- **2 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES** • Amman (Jordan) • Brussels (Belgium)
- **FINAL PUBLICATION** with the results of the project

# 01 INTRODUCING MED CULTURE

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## 1.1 MED CULTURE AND ITS MISSION

Med Culture was a five-year regional programme (2014-2019) funded by the European Union through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Framework to support partner countries south of the Mediterranean in the development and improvement of policies and practices in the cultural sector. These countries include Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine and Syria.

Med Culture included a programme of work developed through a Technical Assistance Team and a programme of grants managed by two consortia headed up by Minority Rights Group International for the [Drama Diversity and Development](#) project and Interarts for the [South Med CV](#) project. This publication focuses on the work developed by the Technical Assistance Team.

In response to the Med Culture programme's terms of reference, the Med Culture Team curated the design and delivery of priority-based actions identified through wide consultation with national and regional authorities, civil society actors and also international organisations and regional EU-funded programmes. The working process involved empowering cultural actors and other civil society activists involved in human rights, gender issues, the environment and so on, to become drivers of change within the environment they are working.

Our ultimate goal was to unlock the potential of culture to promote the wellbeing and resilience of societies and pave the way towards the development of institutional and social environments that affirm culture as a driver

for freedom of expression and sustainable development.

Specifically, the programme aimed to:

- Improve cultural sector governance through the promotion of inter-ministerial cooperation; promote a tripartite dialogue between the programme, the authorities and civil society actors; and raise awareness of the need to improve institutional and legislative frameworks to address better the emerging needs of the sector, which is constantly shifting and evolving in the region
- Strengthen the capacities of civil society actors from the cultural sector and other related fields – human rights, gender equality, refugee management etc. – through the design of tailored capacity development activities and the introduction of methodologies and tools for adult learning, contributing to the sustainability of these activities and the continuing impact on the sector beyond the lifetime of the programme
- Broaden the base of participation by involving younger generations, focusing on women's inclusion and promoting the involvement of cultural actors from remote and culturally marginalised areas
- Underline the value of networking and encourage partnerships and collaborative work at national and regional levels
- Promote sharing of and access to information, resources and best practices available online through Med Culture's website.

## 1.2 MED CULTURE AND THE EU POLICY FRAMEWORK

For the period 1995-2020, the EU developed a political framework to define its relations with Mediterranean countries. This included culture due to its contribution to development. The following gives the background to the regional framework in which Med Culture was embedded.

The framework started with the Barcelona Process, which introduced a novel approach for EU relations with its neighbouring countries to the east and south of the Mediterranean. Although the main goal of the [Barcelona Declaration](#) (November 1995) was to create a free trade zone, the Declaration also stressed the strategic importance of the Mediterranean sea as a link for the peoples who live around it, rather than a separation, and introduced the concept of a partnership between European member states and their neighbours.

In addition to the economic and political pillars it promotes, the Declaration mentions culture as a sub-group of the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs and makes references to peace, stability and prosperity to be achieved whilst promoting dialogue, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The Declaration saw the emergence of a number of regional programmes that confirmed the EU as the only partner to implement regional programmes while encouraging regional and/or sub-regional networking. The Euromed Heritage and Euromed Audiovisual programmes, implemented in successive editions, were significant in the period between 1998 and 2014.

In 2007, the [European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World](#), the very first document defining EU directions in support of culture, established three objectives:

- To promote intercultural dialogue
- To realise the contribution of culture to the economy and employment, and
- To increase the cultural component in the European Union's dealings with third countries

This reaffirmed the role of culture in EU foreign relations.

With enlargement in 2004, the EU had to redefine its policy with its new neighbours. The [Lisbon Treaty](#), which came into force on 1 December 2009, strengthened the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with its Southern and Eastern neighbours to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration.

This goal focuses on economic interests but also builds on interests and values that are fundamental to the EU discourse on democracy and which transcend the heterogeneity of the political systems of the countries involved, the varying degrees of their economic development and their diverse interests.

Although culture only formed a small part of the initiatives promoting social cohesion, it appears under the Development Cooperation Instrument and is integral to the human development approach, which includes decent work, social justice and culture.

It is within this policy framework that Med Culture was designed.

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2011 gave more weight to EU development work and the publication of the Joint Communication [Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations](#) in June 2016,

presented by the High Representative Federica Mogherini and the Commission, represents a breakthrough in the positioning of culture in EU foreign policy.

In addition, the [New Agenda for Culture](#) (May 2018) provided the framework for the next phase of cooperation at EU level. Starting in 2019, this stresses the importance of culture in EU international relations, listing this priority as one of the main three objectives of the EU action for culture.

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Med Culture straddles the important developments arising from the Joint Communication and the new Agenda for Culture, which are attracting a great deal of attention. Its approach and direction can be considered as a precursor to, and an inspiration for, future programmes.



# 02 WHAT WE DID: MED CULTURE AXES

The programme's ambition was to develop its three main axes – governance and cultural policies; capacity development; and networking and communication – in a way that would give each its full share of attention, without compromising the connection and interdependence of each with the other two.

Some of the capacity development activities addressed national and regional policies and institutional frameworks upfront; others raised several issues about participatory approaches to policy development and the role of citizens in influencing them; and these two axes provided ample material for programme communication. Networking was invaluable in promoting Med Culture outcomes within and beyond the cultural sector, as well as bringing in other programme outcomes and wider experiences.

## 2.1 GOVERNANCE AND CULTURAL POLICIES

The position of culture and its potential are generally determined by the history and experience of its development in each country in the region. Currently this reflects first, the level of stability and security, and second, the various existing measures supporting cultural development. Many of these measures lie with policies and institutional frameworks, and any expectations that the Team could achieve change at policy level would have been foolhardy.

What became clear from the very beginning, was that within the existing political climate and

taking into account the programme's lifespan, the best thing for the Team to do was to:

- Focus on raising awareness of the need for cultural policy and institutional reforms among both government agencies and civil society organisations
- Offer authorities, cultural players and artists a safe space for discussion and constructive exchanges, and
- Provide the knowledge and tools that could help them to strive for reforms beyond the confines of the programme.

With these perspectives in mind, the Team defined a methodology for working and a series of activities that focused primarily on process rather than on results, to empower decision makers and civil society stakeholders to develop their own agency for change.

Having concluded that cultural policy reforms were a priority need for people in the region (irrespective of the fact it was also a major stipulation of the Med Culture programme), we designed a number of activities specifically around this theme, which was also addressed in activities dealing with other aspects of cultural development.

During these activities, several areas were explored and discussed:

- Cultural policies at national and regional level, their state-of-play and the challenges they represented in the region's countries

- The different visions, ideas and concepts that participants held about their national policies
- The way cultural policies operate at local level (in municipalities and regions)
- Case study examples as an introduction to possible future directions.

To complement addressing this challenging issue and given general demand from the field, the Team introduced the theme of advocacy for culture. Key questions were: how to lead an advocacy initiative that aims to influence decision making processes? What methodology to adopt and for which context? How to design a discourse that promotes the value of culture as an asset and argues in favour of real change for a more dynamic and lucrative sector?

This theme was addressed in a number of workshops. Although it is up to governments to give culture the value and support it deserves and put it on the track of sustainability, it is also true that with the right skills and the right tools, cultural operators can organise advocacy campaigns to contribute to making this happen.

One major initiative at policy level was the work accomplished in Jordan on the development of a national strategy for culture through a participatory process bringing together authorities, civil society organisations and artists, which can be considered a model to adapt in other countries. Further information can be found below in section 3.3.1.

## 2.2. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity development comprised a large part of programme activities, the design of which had to balance programme objectives prescribed by the EU with the need to ground activities within the realities of the region. Activities were therefore

planned taking on board consultation outcomes and the identification of emerging needs, as well as using information gleaned from research and studies commissioned by the Team. The general intent was to design a coherent and interconnected whole to achieve programme objectives more effectively.

Within this configuration, the main challenge for the Team was to:

- Maintain the focus on specific issues key to establishing a sound base for the development of the sector in the medium and longer term
- Narrow the gap between government and independent/civil society stakeholders and enable a dialogue to promote positive practices
- Empower decision makers and cultural practitioners, including those who were emerging or living in the peripheries (ie outside main urban centres or in border towns), to become agents of building a solid ecosystem
- Promote participants' ownership and autonomy in relation to their own learning, through a participative approach.

Underpinning this approach was the need to harness the work ultimately to contribute to strengthening social cohesion and citizenship (with the duties and responsibilities that brings) and enhancing existing initiatives through creative partnerships to maximise mutual benefits.

The workshops were designed and amended throughout programme delivery to foster continued exchange of practice and expertise among the participants. This focused on their knowledge in operating in challenging environments, with the added contribution of external experts, from both the region and Europe.

## THE DIVERSE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OFFERED

- Thematic workshops and Peer to Peer (P2P):** These supported exchange of experiences and expertise among peers. Activities were an advanced form of capacity development involving cultural practitioners and colleagues from related fields such as sustainable development and human rights. Supported by facilitators and trainers who provided a safe space for discussion and gave some input, participants discussed, proposed and contributed to developing workable solutions for cross-cutting issues in the region, where the 'national' feeds into the 'regional' and vice versa, and where roles are shared between authorities and cultural practitioners in civil society.
- Training of Trainers (ToT):** This enabled cultural operators and activists working in related fields to become professional trainers, leaders and advocates for culture. The aim was to increase the pool of professional trainers in the region and enhance their skills through acquiring new methodologies and tools. The training was valued for:
  - Its process-oriented approach
  - Shifting thinking about training and advocacy (and the interrelationship between the two)
  - The shaping of fun and effective learning experiences, and
  - Sharing best practice, the better to support cultural advocacy, education, policy and management in the region.

It also increased awareness of the power of the group and teamwork, as well as promoting learning as a vital meta-skill for capacity development, social change, resilience and employability.

- Regional Forums:** The three regional forums marked pivotal points in the life of Med Culture. The first addressed creativity, innovation, competitiveness and development as the key words defining the core of what Med Culture was about. The second addressed higher education and Vocational Education & Training (VET) in arts disciplines and in cultural management and policies. It explored ways to establish a regional platform of academics, trainers, cultural practitioners and institutions to develop effective partnerships in cultural management and policies training/educational programmes in the region. The third Forum looked back at what had been accomplished and looked forward to the ways in which culture can most effectively mobilise the imagination of young people and their reflexive capacities, providing them with tools to prevent radicalisation and marginalisation from society and public debate.
- National Focus Groups:** These brought together representatives from the authorities, civil society and the private sector in most partner countries. Open to anyone interested, the groups facilitated frank discussion and serious exchange about the position of culture; the challenges it faced at many levels; and the ways these could be addressed to promote a healthy ecosystem. Organising National Focus Group meetings was one of the

ways in which Med Culture communicated the programme's progress and results, while keeping abreast of the situation on the ground and evolving sector needs.

- **Online individual coaching:** These sessions were complementary to the training, involving some of Med Culture participants in a confidential process of exchange and feedback, the sharing of ideas and collaborative development to help them:
  - Move forward with a project/task/initiative
  - Overcome obstacles
  - Improve their self awareness, and
  - Explore next steps in their work, practice or career.

Some of these sessions were dress rehearsals for a few participants, helping them to prepare for their facilitation of group sessions during the Majalat Forum.

### 2.3. NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION (DOCUMENTATION, DISSEMINATION)

The Team viewed networking as a process of sharing and connecting – and also as a tool to strengthen the culture sector in the region and empower its active players. Creating connections with similarly oriented programmes and exchanging with people within and beyond the programme was key to keeping informed about what was going on in the regional scene; creating new opportunities for partnerships; and sharing and learning from others' experiences.

It also helped the Team to:

- Design capacity development activities more effectively
- Identify active and engaged local partners in the design and delivery of workshops of common interest
- Reach out to a wider audience for the programme's open calls, activities and publications.

The programme also encouraged networking among participants to develop regional and sub-regional partnerships, which led to the creation of a network of an independent 'community of practice' at the level of the Arab region.

Through networking, the programme managed to raise awareness of the value of culture for human development, including in relation to: greater social integration (particularly of young people), freedom of expression, the rights and status of the artist, employment opportunities etc.

Networking also contributed to promoting the value of a more dynamic and well-informed sector, with the benefits it brings for promoting complementarity and mutuality (as opposed to unhealthy competition) and in advocating for a sector that is marked by sturdier support, better governance and more accountability by the authorities.

Networking underpinned many of the programme's activities and from the start, we identified and connected with a number of other networks by participating in their activities and inviting representatives to those of Med Culture.

Regular exchanges between organisations, regional and bilateral programmes, academics, authorities and individuals, aimed to:

- Promote the programme
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and implementation of activities of common interest
- Identify experts who could contribute to Med Culture's activities
- Share tools and information
- Develop or enhance regional and sub-regional networks during the programme implementation.

One important outcome was that networking gave Med Culture high visibility as an important player in the region, particularly among EU institutions, authorities in South Neighbourhood countries, local operators, European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and other important players.

Last but not least, through these efforts, the programme witnessed the emergence of a regional network of cultural operators in the making – a community of practice – ready to evolve into a significant voice in the region. This community of practice includes a number of operators in the cultural sector, including cultural managers, artists, educators and civil society activists who:

- Share the same views about what cultural and community work should be and what it could achieve
- Share values of democratic thinking, civil rights and active citizenship, and
- Feel empowered as professionals to put their newly acquired skills and tools to good use for the benefit of their communities and their respective cultural circles.

One important expert trainer for Med Culture, Sue Kay, refers to them as having been 'Med Cultured'. According to a South Med CV participant, *'External technical and financial support is not only a matter of economic success, but also an empowering factor'* and Med Culture acted as an agent for this empowerment at regional level. The programme also provided some of these cultural operators with opportunities to work as professional facilitators within the programme, other EU funded programmes and within other ongoing programmes in the region.

Networking was supported by a 360° website disseminating studies, research and opportunities from the region and for the region. This was regularly updated following its launch in 2015 and analytics up to January 2019 showed significant site traffic and engagement, as below:

- 778,849 page views
- 263,802 new users, of which
- 130,328 (almost half) used an organic search (ie not driven to the site by a social media post, paid advert or referral) – emphasising the need for such online platforms for artists and cultural operators

Most users originated from Egypt (19.2%), followed by Morocco (12%), Algeria (11%), Tunisia (7.7%), France (6%), Jordan (5%), Lebanon (3.4%), USA (3.4%), Palestine (2.7%) and UK (1.8%). These percentages can be analysed relative to the country's population, its internet availability and speed. In 2018, the last year of the programme, there were more female users (58%) than male (42%). A majority (40%) of users were aged between 25-34, with an almost equal percentage of users with ages between 18-24 (22%) and 35-44 (20%).

Networking was also enhanced by promoting and sharing calls for applications and research

through the website [News section](#) and social networks ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) offering opportunities to Med Culture followers and supporters.

Med Culture's social media platforms became a hub where many cultural operators and artists – not just from the South Neighbourhood, but also from Europe and other regional cultural programmes – would look for opportunities to find new partners, participate in projects, apply for residencies and grants, and much more. By 2016, we were already receiving monthly requests from other European and regional programmes to promote their opportunities, research and reports to a wider audience across the region.

In April 2018, Med Culture participants, partners and friends created a closed Facebook group, [Med Culture Network](#). This continued to be very active and had hosted 295 members by the

end of that year. This group is already building from Med Culture's official Facebook page by sharing and promoting achievements, events and opportunities from the South and for the South Neighbourhood. Importantly, these members – who mostly share similar concerns – are supporting each other's advocacy campaigns and are creating further awareness in the region.

Another online platform that will outlive Med Culture is the LinkedIn page for all the facilitators and trainers who have been 'Med-Cultured': the [Arab Network of Trainers and Facilitators](#). This is another self-organised initiative by some of the Med Culture's ToT participants. It aims to create a regional network of trainers and facilitators in the cultural field and a platform to develop training standards and facilitation in the Arab region. It will also contribute to improving the skills and strengthening the capacities of the network's members as well as develop partnerships to create further job opportunities in the sector.

# 03 HOW WE DID IT: APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND CROSS CUTTING THEMES

## 3.1 APPROACH

The Team defined its approach based on the programme's aim to develop institutional and social environments that affirm culture as a driver for freedom of expression and sustainable development, with a focus on young people as agents for change towards more cohesive, resilient societies. We put in place a methodology to help achieve this while supporting cross-cutting issues that are priorities within EU programmes, such as democratisation, gender equality, the environment etc.

This approach encompassed three axes of action specified in its mandate: **governance and cultural policies, capacity development and networking** and **communication**. The Team viewed these from a perspective of interdependence. We harnessed all activities to develop a plan of action that was needs driven, process based and respectful of the diversity that marks the region, while being flexible enough to adjust to developments and emerging needs. Research and regular consultations helped to consolidate our understanding of the cultural sector in the region, particularly at policy and institutional levels, and helped the Team stay abreast of developments. This constituted the baseline for the action plan and was essential in informing capacity development activities.

Communication and networking were designed to work at multiple levels to best serve programme objectives and keep informed

about the region's cultural sector. Effective dissemination and promotion of available news, studies, research and opportunities, both from the programme and other relevant initiatives, contributed to the pool of knowledge about culture's challenges and achievements in the region and made it accessible to a wider public. This greater audience soon became an open community engaging in dialogue, reinforcing the network at national and regional level and across sectors, which reaffirmed the cross-cutting dimension of culture.

In addition, the Team had to consider two challenging aspects of cultural development: **employability**, which is key to empowering young people and promoting social cohesion while strengthening the cultural field; and **resilience**, based on the recognition of culture as a driver in promoting resilient societies ([A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy](#)).

Employability was extremely challenging given the political and socio-economic context in which the programme was operating. Resilience was implicitly considered in all the work Med Culture was undertaking, to provide cultural professionals with tools to develop their work in challenging environments and empower them to become agents for change. We considered both aspects in relation to the process of empowering cultural actors from both the State and civil society.

In contributing to participants' professionalisation and promoting the governance of the environment

in which they were working, Med Culture strove to unlock the potential of culture to promote the wellbeing – and the resilience – of societies. By opening up the programme to civil society actors from other sectors (human rights, gender equality, education, the environment etc.), we widened the circle of participants and underlined the cross-cutting dimension of culture.

The Team perceived culture as much more than the expression of what is simply functional or instrumental in the public sphere. It was mobilised as part of the realm of the ‘imaginary’ and the drive to give meaning to one’s existence within the collective (Castoriadis, 1996). In that sense, the EU priorities and the Med Culture approach were channelled to fit with the broader aspirations of the cultural scene and society of the participants’ countries.

### 3.2 METHODOLOGY

The Team opted for a methodology of work that would help us achieve optimum results and long term benefits for the sector. From the very outset, we designed a plan of action based on consultations and promoting inclusion as a philosophy and a practice, where innovation and processes were key and sustainability a determinant. We put participants in the capacity development activities at the centre of decisions and allowed ourselves the flexibility to react to changes in the field.

#### CONSULTATIVE PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH

The benefits of engaging in consultations were clear to the Team from the start. These went beyond the initial need to secure a bottom-up approach where activities are evidence-based and respond to priority needs on the ground. For some activities, they evolved into a form of co-production with participants throughout the programme. This meant the themes addressed

were not only defined by cultural operators working in the region, but also the very way they were addressed was based on exchanges with these operators, taking into account their knowledge and experience and what each could bring to the group.

The Team undertook consultations both formally – through specific activities designed for that purpose – and informally, through:

- Discussions and continued exchanges with a wide range of stakeholders from the region and beyond, during the programme’s many capacity development activities
- Networking, through participation in various fora in the Mediterranean region, including – but not limited to – meetings organised through other EU funded programmes, and
- Via email, Skype and WhatsApp.

These consultations were the backbone of Med Culture’s participatory approach.

Consultation meetings included Priming Visits, Roundtables and National Focus Group meetings. Priming Visits with the authorities in countries of the region allowed the Team to introduce the programme to representatives of various ministries (although not across all countries) dealing with culture, tourism, international cooperation, young people, education, social affairs etc. Ministries gave their feedback and shared with us some of the challenges they were facing in their work.

Separate Roundtables with cultural operators and civil society actors working in related fields gave another perspective on the daily challenges they faced and their stunted relations with the authorities. These meetings were mostly organised during the first year of operation, when



the Team was consolidating its proposed plan of action and we wanted to ensure we responded to needs coming directly from the field.

The subsequent National Focus Group (NFG) meetings, an average of two per country throughout the duration of the programme, gathered representatives from the authorities and civil society actors. The aims of these meetings were to:

- Update participants on programme activities and results achieved
- Encourage a dialogue between the 'two sides', deemed necessary for narrowing the gap in the perceptions and building common grounds for the development of the sector, and
- Keep the Team apprised of developments on the ground to inform programme direction and revision of the action plan for the next phase.

These consultations also constituted a form of empowerment for programme participants. They contributed to building a sense of ownership of the programme and underlined the value of dialogue between civil society and the authorities for a healthier cultural sector. Using an array of tools and methodologies for working supported this participative approach. This included the publication of calls for applications to all Med Culture capacity development activities and the focus on peer learning. This fostered the exchange of practice and experience among the participants themselves, enriching the content provided by the workshop trainers/facilitators.

## INCLUSIVE

One often comes across an observation that is a criticism of sorts, that culture in the

Mediterranean region is an elitist pursuit and a privilege for a selected few, working in large/ cosmopolitan urban centres. This perception is as true for the people of the region as it is for those in Europe. However, through five years of operation, we can confirm that professionals working in the sector, or who are connected with cultural projects, are more numerous and diverse than is commonly thought. This gives hope that culture could influence societies in the region and become a vehicle for change.

As the Med Culture Team, we promoted inclusion as an established practice and as a philosophy, dealing with a number of themes that contributed to promote inclusion in the sector across the region. In practice, the Team promoted a culturally inclusive environment in many ways. While the Open Calls published for each one of the capacity development activities increasingly reached cultural operators and activists from remote areas of the region and/or who were not part of established networks, we made sure that this distribution was respected throughout the selection process, without compromising the criteria by which the selection was made. In the same way, we ensured that this selection respected gender parity whilst giving particular consideration to younger operators and to actors from related sectors such as human rights, gender equality, education etc. This whole selection process, undertaken by external experts working with the Med Culture Team, was an extremely challenging but crucial exercise.

The selection of themes to be addressed was based on consultations and emerging needs, and many of them directly or indirectly addressed issues of inclusiveness. Broadening the base and advocacy for culture are obvious examples. The need for laws and policies that ensure cultural participation, increasing and broadening access and the right to express and interpret culture was unanimously supported. So was addressing

cultural policies at local level, provision of cultural spaces, audience development and developing partnerships and collaborative work.

All these activities created an environment where mutual respect, effective relationships, clear communication, explicit understandings about expectations and critical self-reflection were the premise on which the work was built. The value of this premise was transmitted through the ToTs and facilitation workshops organised during the latter phase of the programme.

## INNOVATIVE

The content the Team developed for the programme was determined by the need to be innovative and to contribute to EU priorities, while responding to needs identified through research and the many consultations ongoing throughout the programme. This translated into introducing new themes and bringing new concepts and new perspectives to a familiar theme.

The following were all addressed with reference to new methodologies and tools to enhance participants' professional capacities and skills:

- Cultural management, strategies and policies
- Spaces and audience development
- Broadening the base of cultural work
- Partnerships and collaborative work
- Cultural entrepreneurship and incubators
- Advocacy for culture
- Training of trainers for the cultural sector
- Adult learning and facilitation techniques, and
- Cultural work for building resilient cohesive societies

From the outset, we focused on processes as much as on achieving positive results, with innovation as the watchword. In fact, sustaining such an approach over the five years of its

operation was challenging in and by itself, and relied in large part on the responsiveness of Med Culture's audience and target groups. This process was instrumental in helping a 'community of practice' to emerge on the regional scene.

## PROCESS ORIENTED

Focussing on process was the team's way of guaranteeing the sustainability of our work and its impact on the region in the longer term. This approach was deemed very fitting when dealing with a sector that is complex; integrates a variety of concepts and points of view, often contradictory; and that operates within a reality that is extremely challenging and volatile.

This process-oriented approach worked at four levels:

1. The **thematic content** of the programme's capacity development activities, which responded to expressed priority and emerging needs, promoting new themes and giving a facelift to current ones
2. The **design** of these activities, which promoted new tools, new skills and cutting edge-methodologies and which participants already started applying within their own respective work and field of intervention
3. The **methodological approach**, which promoted participants' ownership and responsibility while fostering exchanges amongst peers, and invested in group dynamics as a way of promoting trust and partnership and paving the way for the development of future projects
4. **Networking**, which underpinned most programme activities and included exchanges with a number of ongoing

programmes, regional networks, cultural organisations, academics, national and local authorities, and EU institutions.

However, this focus on process did not preclude the identification of a number of outcomes the programme set out to achieve and their incorporation in the action plan. Achieving them secured the sustainability of the programme from a more conventional project management perspective.

## SUSTAINABLE

For Med Culture, achieving sustainability was mainly about providing civil society actors from the cultural and other related sectors with the knowledge, methodologies and tools to improve their work and influence the work of those in their immediate environment. The aim was to achieve better results and so make an impact on sector development in a substantial way.

So the Team focused on enhancing human/individual sustainability and:

- Invested substantially in capacity development activities while tailoring a number of these activities to fit the needs of young and emerging cultural operators
- Devised specific activities to further professionalise cultural operators and other civil society activists
- Designed a ToT programme resulting in new perspectives, refreshed skills, enhanced knowledge and a broader range of approaches for participants to try in future training projects.

Sustainability was also achieved through using a range of methodologies to:

- Support different learning styles
- Integrate better theory and practice, and
- Put a strong emphasis on learning by doing and reflecting.

These approaches were passed on to 80 people who participated in the ToT workshops, some of whom have put their new skills to work not only in some of the activities organised through Med Culture, but also in other programmes.

Although networking constituted an axis in itself, it was also harnessed for the sustainability of the programme. Many of the networking activities in which the Team engaged:

- Ensured a higher visibility for Med Culture as an important player at the regional level
- Opened the way to synergies/partnerships with local and regional stakeholders, and
- Facilitated the sharing of information about, and promotion of, Med Culture's capacity development opportunities.

This way of 'doing' was shared during many capacity development activities and was also reflected through the programme as a practice.

## 3.3 THEMES COVERED

### 3.3.1 POLICY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

As noted above, the cultural sector is generally marginalised in the South Mediterranean and countries enjoy varying degrees of development in relation to political stability and measures supportive of development. While the Med Culture Team had no control over the former, we tried to achieve successes, however modest, in improving the measures that are in place (policies, strategies, skills etc.) to enhance the position of culture and make it more relevant

within local communities. Addressing cultural policies and sector governance was therefore a major challenge and there was no quick win in view, particularly because of limited resources and the short duration of the programme.

Given these constraints, the Team's approach was to tackle policy and governance issues through activities (workshops, technical advice etc.), rather than upfront, and through the empowerment of cultural operators who could, in time, demand changes in favour of a well governed robust sector.

Civil society actors were most concerned about the inadequacy of cultural policies to serve their needs and the weakness of government institutions and the operators working within them. These were often described as totally out of sync with reality and outpaced by developments. Institutions' lack of transparency; their reluctance to give the necessary authorisations for cultural actors to develop their work in cultural centres or the public space; and the absence of accountability for their work, were also sources of grievance.

Med Culture addressed all these issues in a number of activities through which participants gained insight into the way cultural policies are planned and developed at national and local level. They explored the value of maintaining a dialogue between their organisations and counterparts working in administrations, in a bid to find common ground and collaborate to promote new policies and get better services and support. In addition, cultural operators came to understand their share of responsibility in getting this collaboration going and became aware of the part they could play as agents for change.

More specifically, in response to an expression of interest from the Ministry of Culture in Jordan in developing a national strategy for culture, Med Culture stepped in and developed an action to deliver this.

*“Culture in Jordan suffers due to the political and economic challenges stemming from regional turmoil. Extremist ideology is the first challenge for Jordanian authorities. Other challenges for culture are the deteriorating economic situation and lack of official funding, as well as the lack of coordination between official institutions and civil society groups, which also need to build experience and proper infrastructure.”*

**Dr. Ahmed Rashed, Assistant Secretary General, Ministry of Culture, Jordan**

The Team suggested implementing a process to include a series of consultations, bringing authorities together with cultural operators and other cultural players. In this way, the initiative designed to fulfil the authorities' need could also rely closely on the role of non-governmental (or independent) actors. It also gave us a chance to address and achieve some results in terms of cultural policies: a true challenge, exacerbated by the regional dimension of the programme. The project was implemented with the full support of the Ministry of Culture and its methodology and implementation acted as a pilot for similar actions in the region.

The Team designed another action, to address the issue of broadening the participation base and promoting culture in the peripheries. For the first theme, it designed a special action for young people working in culture. For the latter, the Team designed a regional workshop gathering together representatives of authorities and civil society actors, which resulted in a series of Guidelines.

*“The programme gave me helpful ideas as someone working in youth activities in Algeria. I learnt about projects being implemented in other countries and while in Algeria, the state does not support cultural activities well and puts barriers in front of organisations that gain funding from abroad, at least now, I have a good idea about how to move forward and to bring the experiences of other countries back home.”*

**Abdelaziz Hamdi, Groupe de Travail I Politique culturelle en Algérie, Algeria**

*“I learned about the interests of young people which is useful to me as a professor in an educational institution. I have encountered peers from other Arab countries who have experiences to share, which has allowed me to learn a great deal about the cultural scene in the Middle East and north Africa.”*

**Hanem Belarbi Mahni, ISA JC-Institut supérieur de l’animation pour la Jeunesse et la Culture, Tunisia**

The Team also designed a regional workshop addressing the issue of cultural policies at local level; making the case for cultural spaces and their positioning in cultural development planning at local level; and the challenges of audience development in contexts that relegate culture to the lower rungs of community development.

All through programme implementation, we ensured the participation of women in activities to guarantee gender parity and favoured the selection of young people and applicants from remote areas who responded to the Open Calls for capacity development activities.

*“Med Culture helped us understand that culture needs the participation of the public, who can decide what they like and what they do not want to see. This approach is better than having cultural projects enforced by us, because culture is from the people and for the people.”*

**Ghasan Biromi, Nawa music centre, Akka**

### 3.3.2 RESILIENCE AND CULTURE

*“Culture is an area where so much can be done with young people across the region for the benefit of their communities. The importance of culture in European Union external relations is linked to building stronger and more resilient societies. At last, the importance of culture has been acknowledged within civil society in this endeavour. We are trying to consider the views of players in the culture sector in order to address their needs and the next programme would be based on that.”*

**Henrike Trautmann, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South, DG NEAR, European Commission**

Resilience has various definitions and interpretations. Because the existing literature very much links it to adversity, there is also a heated debate on how to define adversity, which is viewed as the context in which resilience is called for. From Med Culture’s perspective, shaped through the Team’s knowledge of the region and research of the literature, we saw resilience as the ability to cope and achieve things within a specific (and often adverse) context and cultural setting. As such, resilience was considered inherent to the cultural sector.

Many of programme participants operate under stressful situations related to their position as professionals, with widespread lack of support from their environment, a serious lack of financial support and an uncertain future ahead. Some face obstacles related to freedom of expression, the freedom to gather or the possibility of receiving international support. Many have lived and/or still live in a prolonged stretch of conflict, during the so-called Arab Spring and the unsettling climate following. Many undertake their work in a context where abject poverty, high unemployment (especially among young people), marginalisation and an endemic sense of hopelessness are the norm.

Yet they believe in their work and continue doing it with conviction and with the capacity for self-organisation and adaptation, achieving noteworthy results at local and international level.

The public sector presents parallel situations: whenever employees of ministries and decision makers are motivated, they have to deal with the fragility of their institutions and the weakness of their governance, and experience the frustration that consequently surfaces. What the sector needed was an enhancement of competencies to strengthen and dynamise it, which was the role given to Med Culture.

The Team's approach to resilience was to focus on empowering cultural operators and other civil society actors through learning new skills and new tools. During the last phase of the programme, we focused almost exclusively on building cultural resilience. This reinforcement process included creating an environment where cultural practitioners from the region encountered new ideas, methodologies and tools; learnt about good practices; and exchanged with peers.

This facilitated participants' learning and enhanced the process of overcoming the

challenges they encountered on a regular basis. The group dynamics this created among peers and the resultant regional networking have helped build collective resilience – with a focus on regional collaboration, partnership and sharing of experience and knowledge between peers from the region. Med Culture also strove to facilitate relationships in heterogeneous groups, including people from the public sector and civil society organisations, different fields etc.

The Team also fostered positive adaptation and development in contexts of high risk or adversity, which is the overarching goal of resilience-informed practice. Med Culture was context sensitive and built on local assets, referred to as 'resource factors', supporting the groups that benefited from its capacity development activities to continue working in their environment (positive or desirable development) (Tuppett et al, 2015). Resilience considers the interplay between multiple factors of influence and context, for example the capacity for adaptation through internal stress response systems as well as in relation to external caregiving systems, educational settings and cultural specificities. We made it a fundamental practice to consider the interplay of the many aspects of culture that affect the environment within which individual cultural operators work and interact to ensure more positive results.

Med Culture focused on the cross-cutting dimension of culture and dealt with a broad spectrum of themes, opening up horizons to innovative practices and challenging participants from the region to develop their critical thinking. The Team also focused on mobilising the imagination and reflective capacities of cultural operators and other civil society actors to improve the quality of their work and enhance its impact within their respective communities. Competence precedes resilience and is a main factor to foster as a dynamic in cultural work.

It is worth underlining that Med Culture's notion of cultural resilience is embedded within the EU's resolution to work more closely with partner countries in a bid to align its efforts against radicalisation internally and externally (EC, 2014). The EU integrates these efforts into the action plans it proposes as part of its development co-operation programmes, as well as the political dialogues between the EU and its partner countries.

*“The Med Culture project is extremely important for human development and the creation of a culture of peace. Supporting culture and art financially and technically is extremely important. At this stage of our life, when we are bombarded with negative forces, extremism and radicalism, we need art and culture more than ever to reach communities, especially the young, with alternative narratives. We can empower young people and instil values of social cohesion and cultural diversity. We need the EU to continue supporting such programmes, because we have seen its positive impact on society.”*

**Lina Attel, Director National Centre for Culture and Arts, Jordan**

### 3.3.3 CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYABILITY

*“I don't know how to thank you enough and express how much you – as the inspiring women you are and the Med Culture programme you have created – have impacted on my and Yaraqa's path. I am very happy and excited to tell you that thanks to your support, my project with Drosos has been approved! I shall be working on entrepreneurship in the performing arts specifically!”*

**Romy Assouad, Manager, Yaraqa, Lebanon**

Entrepreneurship has become a keyword in today's discourses about the arts and cultural sector. The Med Culture Team has contributed to this by introducing it as a new theme in the region. This interest in cultural entrepreneurship stems from our concern to integrate the cultural and creative sectors with economic development and contribute to the potential of employability within these sectors, particularly for young people. Cultural entrepreneurship has transformed the cultural and creative sectors as a tool for regional development and urban planning in many parts of the globe. Med Culture thought it necessary to promote this in the South Mediterranean region and start confronting the challenge of combining commercial and artistic perspectives. This interest takes on particular significance when young people's employability in the region is seen as the answer to developing peaceful inclusive societies (European Commission, 2015).

The Med Culture Team addressed cultural entrepreneurship and employability from a cross-cutting perspective. We based our approach on evidence that cultural operators in the region already had many entrepreneurship skills that had helped them survive in a society in which their activity and their status are poorly recognised or structured. However, they needed support in developing new professional skills, working processes and connections, and to learn about the dynamics conducive to creating a favourable environment in which to operate. The Team also explored the position of higher education and VET in relation to cultural policies, cultural management and arts disciplines, and their contribution to promoting the employability of graduates.

Within this approach, we set out to understand the root causes of the gap between the cultural sector and employment, by looking into higher education and VET provision and the challenges this presents for graduates to find employment

and join the workforce. Based on findings and recommendations from the three studies commissioned for that purpose, we organised two P2P sessions on cultural entrepreneurship with an approach that supports and nurtures the interaction of arts and culture with other sectors of the economy.

The Team also organised a Forum of academics, training centres and cultural operators as well as civil society organisations/actors to explore the possibilities of establishing a platform to facilitate networking and propose common solutions to common problems: for example, improving the quality of courses/modules and updating curricula to meet the needs of the cultural field and job market demands.

Last but not least, we designed a number of ToT sessions focused on the professionalisation of cultural operators and civil society actors from related fields to promote their employability. As noted above, this led to some of the participants working as facilitators.

*“Through the training I had with Med Culture, I could see the difference between teaching, training and facilitating. Training and facilitating are more creative ways to interact with the students. I had no confidence in my job and with Med Culture I learnt new skills to become a better teacher.”*

**Laila Moqaddem, Instructor at ENCG KANITRA, Morocco**

### 3.3.4 ADVOCACY AND CULTURE

*“There is an interest in developing the cultural scene in the Middle East and North Africa, but there are still many issues that need to be worked out and implemented. Advocacy at the regional level is a very important element, with the aim to keep culture high on the agenda of policy makers as well as donors, international organisations and corporate business. Med Culture is the only programme for cultural cooperation in the region and I hope it continues due to its importance in maintaining interest in this vital sector.”*

**Sana Ouchtati, Director, More Europe, Tunisia**

Advocacy for culture is a pioneering theme in the South Mediterranean region. The Team addressed this in two regional workshops and integrated it as a major topic within other capacity development activities, as it gained interest among programme participants. Advocacy as a continuing learning process was also addressed in the ToT sessions.

*“The idea of the programme is great because it helps establish cooperation between various stakeholders in the culture sector, be they official bodies or independent organisations. We need to work in a complementary way with each other in order to stimulate growth in the cultural scene and make it sustainable.”*

**Adel Abdel Wahab, Theatre director at Hewan, Egypt**

The Med Culture Team introduced the theme of advocacy as both a concept and a practice following demand from cultural operators from the independent field and public authorities. We promoted advocacy as a tool for real participation



by citizens in decision making by government and other powerful bodies. We also promoted advocacy, as one of the ways – along with elections, open forums, special commissions and so on – that different sectors of civil society can put forward their agendas and have an impact on public policies, participating in a democratic and systematic way in decision making about matters that affect their lives.

This initiative fitted with Med Culture's ambition to be innovative and pioneering. Although advocacy initiatives in the region have reached a mature level in fields such as equal opportunities and human rights, there is generally little awareness about the value of advocacy to promote culture among cultural professionals.

Advocacy for culture was also seen as an opportunity to consolidate Med Culture outcomes by giving participants agency to become drivers for change in their own environment. Providing training in advocacy was a strategic and necessary complement to the other training sessions on offer and deemed essential to guarantee a long term impact from Med Culture's action.

Indeed, Med Culture was instrumental in improving civil society actors' knowledge of the cultural policy environment in their respective countries. As aware as they were of the limitations of these policies and the fact that they fell short of meeting their needs as cultural operators, their lack of knowledge about the processes of policy making and of the role they could fulfil in improving the situation was an obstacle for a real engagement on their part.

Med Culture provided them with the 'savvy' and the tools necessary for initiating a successful advocacy action. The Team offered training in cultural policies and highlighted the value and necessity of maintaining a dialogue with

government representatives, especially at local level, in order to maintain the flow of information so that each side remains informed about the work and the challenges that the other faces.

We also organised training in building partnerships and innovative collaborations, and in pooling resources as an important requisite to build a sustainable activity and make the most of available financial resources and opportunities. This provided participants with the elements needed to engage in an advocacy initiative. Training focused particularly on the techniques of building an advocacy case based on a strong knowledge of the political, local and sectoral context, focused in the articulation of the problem they wished to solve and with concrete solutions – with the whole supported by robust evidence to support the arguments.

Harnessing this knowledge and these new skills to an advocacy action should empower participants to position themselves as fully fledged and committed partners in decision making processes regarding the cultural sector.

*“Med Culture has helped me evolve as an artist. This is how I started showing my work outside Jordan. On the policy level, I think all the national focus groups have learned in terms of capacity building about how to lobby and advocate for culture. The learning has been immense.”*

**Dima Shahin, Film maker, Jordan**

### 3.3.5 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORK

*“The connections we built with people we met through Med Culture are coming to fruition: the musician Ghassan Birumi from Haifa gave a drum-playing workshop in Jenin and we have applied for a grant to organise drumming workshops and a musical event in Jenin. We are working with Mahdi Mohammed from the Darak Center, Egypt on puppet training and shadow theatre project, where artists from Egypt will come to Palestine and vice versa. We are organising theatre shows in renovated heritage spaces in collaboration with Shatha Safi from Riwaq. We are also working on getting Manel Souisi from Tunisia to screen Tunisian films, Nisreen Daly to organise a hip hop workshop and Siaf Aljailasi to give street theatre workshops.”*

**Rawand Arqawi, Fragments Theatre, Jenin, Palestine**

Partnerships play an important role in the implementation of cultural projects. They also contribute to reinforcing the structure of organisations and enhancing their standing within the cultural scene. Finally, they can enrich the development of career paths for cultural operators. In environments where the cultural sector is poorly structured and/or fragmented and where resources are scarce, partnership building and pooling resources are an important requisite for building a sustainable activity and making the most of available financial resources and opportunities.

Imagination, inventiveness and flexibility are key to successful partnerships. The stakes are all the more important in a region where many cultural operators admit having difficulties with engaging in collaborative work, in spite of the fact that new models, such as co-working, have emerged

and are flourishing. Cultural professionals are constantly challenged to develop collaborations in order to meet their various needs, but also to create synergies with a number of counterparts from civil society, the public or private sector, who do not necessarily work by the same codes or even speak the same language.

*“I really want to thank you for giving me this great opportunity to meet and work with such a great group of art and cultural experts. The workshop design was really impressive, the discussions that took place were rich and insightful. It helped me personally a lot to understand the context and the conditions that our cultural organisations are working within, especially given my background and previous experience being in economic empowerment and youth, so the cultural sector is a bit new to me...I have already started collecting information in order to prepare for new projects that I hope will contribute to the development and empowerment of the cultural sector.”*

**Waheed Zahran, Programmes Manager - Drosos Foundation, Palestine**

Med Culture addressed partnerships as a methodology within the programme. The Team facilitated the dialogue between independent actors and public authorities, based on the principle that a partnership between the two is a prerequisite for healthy governance of the cultural sector and for promoting a dynamic cultural ecosystem. We also applied collaborative work in the approach, taking into account a few golden rules:

- Listening
- Clarity
- A careful assessment of the collaborative process
- The anticipation of risks, and

- Keeping an open mind for unexpected results that could be turned into opportunities.

*“When you look at the problems and the conflicts that mark communities within the region, we realise to what extent we have things in common. I could not have guessed that Lebanon or Jordan are confronted with the same issues that Libyan society and Libyan culture are facing...”*

**Youssra Al Hossairi, Cultural Operator, Libya**

*“Through the programme we created networks, developed expertise and managed to build new collaborations and new understanding of the region’s cultural sectors.”*

**Samy Abdelguerfi, Musaika Association, Algeria**

Given the dynamics and challenges the context represents, partnership and collaborative work have been at the heart of the Med Culture Team’s work in terms of content and practice, with participants and in connection with other programmes and funding bodies. This was translated in the way capacity development activities were organised. For example:

- Two P2P workshops for each theme with the same group of participants gave time and opportunity for them to develop possible partnerships
- There was the opportunity for several cultural operators and representatives of authorities to take part in a number of activities (Houna a Shabab, P2P, ToT, workshops), offering them the chance to meet again with colleagues as well as get to know new people.

This organisation helped to build a solid and ever growing community of practice.

Finally, a cycle of two workshops entitled ‘Reinventing partnerships’ also focused on setting the basis for successful sustainable collaborative work and analysing a variety of current models and practices that promote exchanges with different stakeholders.

On several occasions, the Team also strove to develop collaborations with other EU funded programmes/projects and international organisations. This was the case, for instance, with UNESCO, with whom an indicator for young people’s involvement in cultural activities in Jordan was developed as a joint endeavour.

We also ran a ToT workshop involving people who were going to be in charge of animating and facilitating public meetings and training sessions in the Framework of Tfanen, a strand of the bilateral programme to support culture between EU and Tunisia. Most recently, Med Culture participants have been recruited to facilitate sessions bringing together a large number of high level EU representatives and civil society members for the Civil Forum organised by Majalat, which took place in Brussels in November 2018.

### 3.3.6 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*“The workshop supported such rich discussions, reflection, ideas and experiences which have all contributed immensely to my role. I’ve started applying new techniques and sharing knowledge with my colleagues, there’ll be a wider and longer lasting positive impact.”*

**Adel Adam, Alternative Tourism Operator, PalestineAlgeria**

Professional development is about ensuring that knowledge, skills and approaches at work stay relevant and up to date. The ecological equation  $L \geq C$  (Revans, 2011/2016) holds that learning (L) must equal or exceed the rate of change (C) because of the need to deal with high levels of environmental change and/or disturbance. An enhanced, contextually rooted and multi-faceted approach to the 'L' in this equation grew to be one of the defining features of the Med Culture programme and a key to the success of its professional development activities.

This did not happen overnight. Through careful experiment, reflection on the part of the Team, and detailed evaluation of each development activity by participants and trainers, a more conventional teaching-orientated approach shifted – irrevocably and unapologetically – to a learner-focused one. This was based on a deceptively simple realisation: that learning (not the same as teaching) is a vital meta-skill for effective advocacy, capacity development, social change and employability in and through culture. In other words, all the aims, values and themes of the Med Culture programme had learning at their core and were dependent on learning for their realisation.

*“I am sure that the impact of this training will be reflected in one way or another on everyone’s personal or working life, which will in turn impact on those around them. Each of us is aware of this impact that’s come through the people we’ve met, techniques that have been used or training materials we’ve been given.”*

**Mohammad Hussein Salem Najajrah,  
Palestine Museum of Natural History,  
Palestine**

Using the principles of **non-formal education**, Med Culture development activities focused increasingly on:

- An appreciation of **adult learning** (andragogy) as a process which is problem based and collaborative rather than traditionally didactic (see box below)
- The different ways in which a safe and productive **learning environment** can be created and managed
- The development of **group dynamics** favourable to different contexts, objectives, stages and ‘styles’ of learning
- The **power of the group** as a pool of experiential knowledge.

Through the application of these principles, and in iterative fashion, the following features came to characterise the Med Culture approach to professional development:

**The ‘oxygen mask’:** cultural and civil society operators who work in challenging circumstances are often reluctant to prioritise their own development needs, preferring instead to focus exclusively on their work and the needs of others. The Med Culture programme made it clear that – using the flight safety analogy – unless you attend to your own oxygen needs, you cannot effectively support anyone else or make the best work you can. Professional development is thus an essential component of practice, not an optional extra.

**Appreciation, not deficit:** all programmes built on participants’ individual and collective knowledge and expertise, not only for reasons of respect, but also to heighten energy, sharpen vision and inspire confident action for change.

**‘Open kitchen’** (courtesy of Hatem Hassan Salama): there was no hidden agenda and the what, how and why of every session was clear, transparent and shared. This applied not only to any topic under discussion, but the tools, methods and techniques used, the better to ensure sustainable learning (of self and others) long after the workshop had finished. Such frankness – alongside a confidentiality rule – also helped create a safe space in which difficult topics could be explored.

**The flexible ‘play mat’ and ‘script’:** every programme was introduced through a post-it covered schedule (play mat) and congruent ‘dramaturgy’ which remained a ‘work-in-progress’ and was revisited every day, with amendments agreed according to participants’ strengths and wishes. This was supported by a training team ‘script’ to help keep track of learning objectives, timing and flow, which was also made available online to all participants once each programme was completed.

**Signposting:** shifts along the continuum of teaching-training-facilitation were highlighted to ensure maximum engagement in the learning process. Activities were often prefaced by referring back to the learning cycle; learning styles; and the importance of respecting each other’s learning.

**Serious fun:** from the start there was an expectation of playfulness and humour to counterbalance – sometimes even to assist – the exploration of very serious subject matter. Morning warm-ups, post-lunch energisers and closing exercises became commonplace – often led by participants themselves. The donning of party spectacles to signify a shift of perspective; the offer of a toffee to someone who might be taking up a lot of air time; the request to form a human sculpture to explore a concept were far from unusual in Med Culture workshops.

**Handing over to the group:** as much work as possible was conducted in small and diverse clusters, the better to encourage in-depth exploration, meaningful peer to peer dialogue and the foundations for subsequent collaborative action (which it was discovered grows organically; it cannot be forced or engineered).

**Making it visual:** graphic facilitation (courtesy of Charlotte Bohl) became a powerful tool for Med Culture development activities, enabling participants to ‘see’ what they were generating and to build a ‘picture’ of their learning journey. And as with all methods and techniques used (e.g. one-on-one coaching and facilitation) participants were encouraged to try them out for themselves.

**Reflecting in as well as reflecting in** (Schon, 1983): while cultural and civil society operators are very adept at reflecting in the midst of what they are doing, they are less used to reflecting on what they have done, simply through pressure of work. Reflection time was built in to Med Culture development activities – often accompanied by personal learning logbooks – the better to enable everyone to *‘know what they think by seeing what they say’* (attributed to E. M Forster, 1927/2005).

And finally:

**The power of modelling:** in evolving these features, there was an unusually high level of trust between Med Culture as the ‘commissioner’, the trainers/facilitators as ‘suppliers’ and the participants as ‘beneficiaries’ – even when things didn’t go as planned. This deliberate move away from ‘command and control’ to genuine collaboration and ‘shared leadership’ paid real dividends. The modelled sense of a bigger ‘us’, enabled everyone to become better and more competent learners, professionals and people.

*“When I joined the programme, I wondered why I had been chosen to take part. But after I met the team members and we talked, I realised I have a good profile as a professional involved in culture – something I didn’t recognise beforehand. I was very happy with the trainers’ approach: they gave me confidence and helped me focus on improving myself on both professional and personal levels.”*

**Ahlem Souhalhia, Association Horizon Des Jeunes Investisseurs, Tunisia**

**You could say we all became a ‘Med Cultured’ community in the end.**

## ADULT LEARNING

The principles of andragogy (how adults learn), as articulated by Knowles (1984), suggest that adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating their own learning. In other words, adult learners:

- **Need to know** why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it
- Need to be responsible for their own decisions and to be treated as capable of **self-direction**
- Have a variety of **life experiences** which represent the richest resource for learning
- Are **ready to learn** those things they need to know in order to cope effectively with real life situations
- Are **motivated to learn** when they perceive that it will help them perform tasks they confront in those life situations.

In adult learning, the role of the trainer is less about conveying knowledge and information (**teacher centred**) and more about creating and maintaining a supportive climate that promotes the conditions necessary for learning to take place (**learner centred**): so with an increased emphasis on **process** rather than **content**. In such settings, experiential learning methods e.g. case studies, role play, participant presentations and group tasks such as problem-solving are regarded as particularly useful (see [Train the Trainers’ Toolkit](#), NHS Education for Scotland).

According to Kolb (1984), the process of adult learning follows a pattern or cycle comprising four stages: **experiencing, reflecting, conceptualising** and **planning next steps**. The idea is that while adults are more likely to remember things if they involve real experience, experience on its own won’t get us very far. We also need to reflect on our experiences, make ‘generalisations’ (conceptualise) about them and then plan how we’d do things next time. It’s called a learning cycle because it is possible to start at any point and repeat the process many times; but the order in which we go tends to be the same. Using an example of baking bread, we might start with a recipe (conceptualisation), make the bread (experience), think about why it didn’t rise (reflection), decide we need to leave it somewhere warmer (conceptualisation), make adjustments to the recipe (planning) and try again (experience).

Honey and Mumford (1986a, 1986b) took Kolb's thinking further and concluded that adults tend to develop learning styles or preferences derived from the four stages of the learning cycle. Thus, **activist learners** tend to immerse themselves fully in experiences, enjoying the moment and thriving on new challenges; **reflectors** tend to listen and analyse before contributing, needing time to think things through before acting; **theorists** like principles, models, systems and theories on which to base their experiences; **pragmatists** like trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they are likely to work in practice, or be applicable in real life. The idea here is that learning experiences must cater for all these preferences to be fully effective.

It would be fair to say that these theories of learning – like others – have been the subject of critical examination and that (adult) learning is a continually evolving field of enquiry. Consequently, while Med Culture took note of this thinking, it did so in a way that informed rather than circumscribed, and allowed its own emergent, contextually rooted and multi-faceted approach to come into being.

# 04 WHAT WE LEARNT

*“I learnt how to build sustainable projects through sharing knowledge and experience with other people with the same goals and concerns.”*

*‘This programme has been extremely helpful to my professional development. Through dialogue and peer to peer learning, we have learnt how to think ahead and find ways of improving our work in the future.’*

*‘I would like to see more programmes like this as well as follow-up activities, in order to keep in touch with this great network of culture activists and officials.’*

**Abdelsamee Abdullah, Director of Sailors for Art, Egypt**

The Med Culture experience has been invaluable at many levels. It clearly revealed the creativity and talents that exist across the region and the potential these represent for the future development of the sector. This contributed to the impetus the programme gained during its implementation and should serve as a signal for sustaining support for culture by the EU and other donor organisations as a value in itself, in addition to its contribution to cross-cutting developments.

The sections that follow draw together the key learning we as the Med Culture Team have taken from the experience of the programme and which we offer as guidance to others interested in adapting and furthering the approach we have taken.

## 4.1 STRENGTHEN THE CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM

**Broaden the base:** giving voice to all the people who are involved in culture or are potentially interested and willing to get involved in cultural work, is vital. This implies paying special attention to young people and aspiring professionals, and especially those living or operating in the peripheries who have hardly any access to international networks, new trends or funding opportunities. It also involves opening the discussion with operators and activists for whom culture is not their core business and who might be dealing with entrepreneurship, advocacy, local policies, management of spaces, human rights or sustainable development.

**Support emerging actors:** while champions are driving forces within their communities and their work needs to be acknowledged and promoted, the key for a strong, healthy cultural sector lies in its diversity and its respect for, and inclusion of, emerging artists and activists. There is a plethora of ‘budding’ initiatives and new organisations emerging on the scene that can potentially contribute to building a sustainable cultural environment. It is the duty of public institutions to provide them with the necessary support so they can flourish.

**Create a safe space for discussions:** throughout the life of the programme, which started three years after the Arab uprisings, the region witnessed considerable turbulence and socio-political upheavals that have not translated into substantial reforms. In fact, any developments that have resulted from this situation vary from one country to another and



have had their repercussions on culture. One example is the relationship between authorities, civil society organisations and artists, which remains very challenging. So do the restrictions that civil society actors and artists are confronted with in terms of freedom of expression, mobility, exploring new forms of art and so on.

Med Culture offered a safe space for open and frank discussions between representatives of authorities and independent players. Exchanges between them allowed for a better understanding of the dynamics and the restrictions that each side faces on a daily basis. These exchanges are necessary and fruitful because they can pave the way for future collaborations.

## 4.2 BE PREPARED TO BE SURPRISED

**Be sensitive and responsive:** rather than follow a standard pre-defined programme, Med Culture offered a tailored and needs driven agenda. The programme also enjoyed enough flexibility to adjust and redesign its activities along the way, based on emerging needs and requests from the ground. This approach implies listening, paying attention to developments on the ground and putting the needs of programme participants at the centre of the action.

**Focus on autonomy:** building on the peer learning approach, where horizontal exchanges and sharing of experiences among participants underpin the learning process, it is necessary to encompass the variety of profiles and the strengths that each person brings to the group. Through this approach, participants become champions of their own learning and acquire the level of autonomy necessary for their own professional growth. Therein lies the strength of the Med Culture methodology and the key to the sustainability of its work.

**Experiment and be creative:** working with cultural operators and artists can be demanding and a standard 'normative' approach is not the answer. Experimentation and creativity are called for if you are to succeed. In addition to the need to take into account the basic requirements of adult learning, a measure of inventiveness, originality and imagination that can grab participants' interest and provoke their responses is required. Experimenting with movement, images, sound or performances is worthwhile and can become the red thread for effective learning.

## 4.3 RESOURCES: TIME, PROCESSES, HUMAN RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

**Take your time:** 'Time is worth its weight in gold' is not an exaggeration when it comes to cultural development. Investing the time and resources needed to develop activities that are essential for cultural work is of fundamental importance. These activities include:

- Designing made-to-measure programmes
- Involving public authorities and keeping them committed to, and engaged in, processes that require time and effort
- Reaching out to and mobilising people outside the circle of the 'usual suspects', and
- Providing safe spaces for heterogeneous and disparate people to exchange freely, building trust and partnerships that can lead to common projects.

These can only emerge from a strong conviction of their value and contribution to sustainable development. They are part of a process that needs time to mature... and involves strong conviction. Reiteration is vital too: meeting people several times helps to speed and strengthen partnership building processes.

**Collaborate with experts:** identifying experts who could contribute effectively to the programme within the approach the Team had set was a major challenge. Trainers and facilitators of the capacity development activities were carefully selected based on their:

- Speciality
- Experience
- Capacity to understand the cultural context and respond to the diverse profiles of the participants, and
- Their appreciation of the skills they had developed through their work.

The relationship of trust we built with some of the experts went beyond their contractual mandate and had a positive impact on the general direction of the programme. A true companionship developed with some of them, enriching reflections and contributing to future strategies. In a nutshell, a long term collective effort enabled creative and well thought through initiatives.

**Document, publish and disseminate:**

research about the cultural sector of the region is generally lacking and falls short of providing the elements needed for long term planning and broad ranging development. To imagine out-of-the-box proposals, develop appropriate solutions, or identify the right reference institutions/ interlocutors, one needs to have access to high quality and specialised documentation. Med Culture has contributed a number of publications on themes the Team identified during its consultations throughout the region. Focus documents, guidelines and studies became freely available on the Med Culture website. These have been fundamental in informing some of the decisions throughout the course of the programme, but they are by no means sufficient to fill the gaps in information that still exist in relation to the cultural sector.

## 4.4 MOBILITY, PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING IN THE REGION

**Make partnerships and share resources:**

new organisational models fostering pooling of resources, building partnerships and promoting collaborations, are increasingly becoming the norm in cultural work. Their value lies in the solidarity they promote in an environment where resources are scarce and competition can often be counterproductive. In a region where collaborative work is still emerging, there is still a need to experiment with new ways to work collectively.

**Advocate for a regional programme:**

the survey conducted through the programme at the end of 2017 showed that the overwhelming majority of Med Culture participants considered mobility/networking as one of the most important components of the programme. 91% of the respondents confirmed that the programme had helped them benefit from national/ regional networks and increased collaboration opportunities. In a region where north-south and south-south mobility is increasingly thwarted, it becomes all the more urgent to offer opportunities for peers to meet, exchange ideas and be inspired by each other's work and experiences. This is the key for innovation and growth.

As explained above, strengthening the cultural ecosystem is key for achieving a healthy cultural sector in South Mediterranean countries and promoting the wellbeing of societies. As a sector that enhances identity and collective confidence, but also creativity and innovation, culture should be valued as a priority in development planning and development cooperation. It is also a sector that cannot thrive without experimentation, without collaboration and the possibility of free movement, and without the time and resources it needs to evolve and spread. From this perspective, Med Culture can be viewed as an experiment that merits emulation.

## 05 WHAT'S NEXT

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After five years of serious work and intense moments shared with a growing community of cultural operators and activists, it is now time for us as a Team to step aside and hand over the work to others, knowing that the battle for culture is far from won.

As the only cultural player at regional level, it becomes incumbent upon the EU to continue supporting culture in the South Neighbourhood while building on Med Culture results. A momentum was established and a large community of operators has been mobilised: continuity is therefore crucial and expectations of EU support are high. The programme has opened the way to a number of cultural development avenues that need to be explored further to ensure real impact in the longer term. The EU action should therefore continue to promote mobility and networking at regional level, while focusing on the peripheries and isolated professionals, and to explore opportunities to open up to other regions of the globe (Asia, Africa).

To support a healthy cultural sector that can contribute to the development of societies, it is necessary to develop an all-encompassing framework that can engage a large and diverse number of voices. This framework should include, whenever possible, policy dialogue: the EU is very well placed to act as mediator in facilitating meetings between all the stakeholders, in particular authorities and civil society organisations. It should focus on small(er) organisations, emerging operators and innovative projects, as this is where the trajectory of cultural development lies. The EU should promote creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship, opening new avenues for economic development and independent initiatives. It should also consider building audiences, rallying young people and engaging them in decision making processes.

To ensure the sustainability of any future intervention – whether at local, national or international level – capacity development initiatives are vital, and all levels of education should be mobilised:

- Higher education and professional training in artistic and culture related disciplines
- Specialised vocational training and innovative modules that match skills to market needs, and
- Training of Trainers programmes.

It is only through these that the sector can gain professional status and achieve a measure of autonomy. Within this process, the integration of digital tools is critical.

A well thought out approach that supports serious and broad participation is also essential for promoting a wide reaching and healthy cultural sector. Throughout Med Culture, the participative approach promoted by the Team translated into a number of measures which, put together, contributed to attract newcomers; provided a safe space for frank and intense exchanges; and guaranteed participants' engagement in deciding on the content of the programme, which was planned as bespoke – including how it was delivered.

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This approach resulted in a wider mobilisation of cultural professionals and strengthened their ownership of the programme, which we hope will continue to have an impact after its closing. The legacy of Med Culture is now partly in the hands of the institutions, but principally in those of our colleague participants who are disseminating their newly acquired knowledge through their practice.

## FINAL WORD

**In official terms, Med Culture was a European programme which aimed to promote culture as a driver for human, social and economic development in South Mediterranean countries.**

**Through the lived experience of the programme, much more than that was achieved. With us all – Team members, participants, expert trainers, supporters and wider beneficiaries – being ‘Med Cultured’, we have embedded a particular way of doing, a way of thinking, a way forward. The rich community of diverse people who have taken part in our five year journey will continue the legacy of Med Culture: through the rooted partnerships, enhanced skills, widened scope of opportunities, raised awareness and the growing network we have built together. Today, we pass the torch on to them – the real activists behind this programme – and we wish them all the best for a long, flourishing, and indeed challenging journey ahead.**

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# 8 COUNTRY FACTSHEETS

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Country specific activities, studies, workshops and projects that have been implemented within the framework of the Med Culture programme in:

- ALGERIA
- EGYPT
- JORDAN
- ISRAEL
- LEBANON
- MOROCCO
- PALESTINE
- TUNISIA

To view the country factsheets, check the *Publications* section in the Med Culture website:  
<https://www.medculture.eu/medculture-country-factsheets>