

ENCATC Statement

UNESCO Regional Consultation for Europe and North America Thematic Session 1 “Investing in culture and creativity for job creation and socio-economic development”

13 December 2021

Hello, it is my pleasure to be joining you – on behalf of ENCATC, the European Network on Cultural Management and Policy, I want to thank you for the kind invitation to contribute to this important gathering. I am an international board advisor of ENCATC, where I also represent the interests of a sister organization based in North America, the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE), for which I was a past president. And I am a professor of performing arts management and leadership at DePaul University in Chicago.

My remarks view the critical topics of today through the lenses of ENCATC members, who are primarily, although not exclusively, academics and researchers. And in efforts to promote ongoing global dialogue among our network memberships, we have instituted an ongoing Global Conversation at ENCATC and AAAE annual conferences, as a tool for developing global cultural and academic collaborations, which directly address the topics informing this consultation.

When considering investment in culture and creativity as a means to job creation and socio-economic development, it is well documented that creative and analytical skills are now understood as foundational, and among the most desired attributes by employers today. This audience already understands the extreme value of culture – beyond the inherent benefits of cultural activities – but also as a tool for fostering communication, building bridges between communities, creating common understandings, and providing modes of expression. Our artists and cultural organizations are now taking leading roles in efforts of virtually all global initiatives – from climate change to diversity and inclusion to the development of technology and its uses, to name a few. Culture is more vital and more needed than ever during our pandemic and post-pandemic world.

However, we are in the midst of what is referred to as the Great Resignation -- with millions of people leaving jobs and security for a more balanced and healthy lifestyle – including many in the creative industries. We are now in jeopardy of losing pivotal sections of our fields – the artists and those that help support the art. So we need to reconsider the pipeline that serves as an entrance into our cultural fields, to insure that these are considered viable professions.

We are at a crossroads – we have an opportunity coming out of these times, to focus on policy that elevates training and education in culture and cultural management. We are entering a new era of interdisciplinary education for those that present, produce, and create art – with cross-functionality and being skilled in multiple areas – with greater focus on soft skills, related to cultural and social competence, emotional intelligence, crisis management and adaptability, and entrepreneurship – all areas that those in our fields have faced head-on these past months with no preparation – in efforts of survival and sustainability.

Cultural management education will need to foster new and deep relationships with cultural organizations, heritage sites, festivals, theatres, orchestras, galleries, museums, and others, locally and globally. The lessons learned from the past couple of years cannot all be taught in a classroom, and support for genuine partnerships in education are needed. The expertise of those who have led cultural organizations during our turbulent times need to be coupled with the traditional academic setting – and include a long list of partners such as governmental bodies, private philanthropy and public funding. Deeper collaborations between academic institutions and cultural venues as learning laboratories will, therefore, be of prime importance as we redesign the education and training of our next generation of cultural leaders for an uncertain, yet more sustainable, future.