

**BIG
PULSE**
DANCE ALLIANCE

TURIN DECLARATION

November 2024



Shaping the Future of Contemporary Dance

Insights from the Big Pulse Dance Alliance project

The draft declaration was read at Teatro Carignano, Turin on 24 October 2024 during Big Pulse Reflections, a two-day professional forum marking the end to the Big Pulse Dance Alliance project, and as part of the launch of the Dance Festivals Network Europe. The event was held during Torinodanza Festival, in the presence of several authorities, including Mr. Georg Haeusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport in the European Commission.

Why dance is important for Europe and should receive increased funding and support

Dance transcends language and connects people across cultures. As an integral part of the broader cultural landscape, dance allows Europe to celebrate and preserve its diverse cultural heritage while pushing the boundaries of creativity and innovation.

As a form of non-verbal communication, dance fosters inclusion and overcomes barriers. It facilitates collaboration across borders, promoting diverse and multicultural identities. Additionally, dance festivals offer a unique context in which creativity and connectivity can thrive. They offer a space that becomes a laboratory for innovation, cross-sector collaboration and audience engagement, as well as a meeting point for cultural stakeholders.

Through the vector of dance, as well as its festivals and networks, Europe can continue to contribute to the ecology of the global arts scene, creating connections that nourish and enrich language, politics, and geography. Supporting dance ensures that Europe remains a vibrant, culturally rich continent that champions artistic innovation and cultural dialogue.

Challenges Facing Dance Today

1. Sustainability and Ecological Working Responsibility

Working towards sustainability means taking into consideration not only environmental responsibilities, but also the working conditions of arts professionals and the development of audiences. The combination of economic recession, rising nationalist agendas and the urgency for sustainability can lead to damaging international exchanges and collaboration. Festivals and artistic teams must continue to embrace practices that ensure good balance.

2. Lack of Stable Funding

Funding for festivals – key environments for audience engagement and creating inclusive spaces – and dance productions remains fragmented, leaving many artists and organisations without long-term financial security. Lack of sustained funding models reduces the opportunity for vital creative risk taking and restricts the growth of the sector, including opportunities for transcontinental collaborations that have the potential for bringing global perspectives into European dance.

3. Audience Engagement and Visibility

Dance has the potential to reach and engage even more diverse audiences, but access to performances remains limited, particularly outside of traditional theatre spaces and major cultural hubs as well as in rural areas. Underserved communities, the limitations of digital platforms and a continued lack of transcontinental showcases remain a challenge to broadening visibility and accessibility of contemporary dance across Europe and beyond.

4. Diversity and Inclusion

There are still many perspectives and voices missing in both programming and leadership in the dance sector. We are often not aware of “who is not in the room” – on stage, backstage and in the audience. There is also a lack of vital partnerships and diverse perspectives within Europe and across continents that can enrich the artistic landscape and audience experience.

5. Political Advocacy

Amidst heightened political turbulence, the arts – dance included – are increasingly under threat. The sector has an important role in advocating for artistic freedom and engaging with policymakers to protect its role in fostering dialogue and social change, particularly through collaboration with national and international artists and global partners.

6. Outdated Structures and Collaboration Models

Traditional touring and presenting models are becoming unsustainable. Methods of collaboration are outdated, resources are not effectively shared and digital tools are yet to be fully embraced. There is untapped potential in sector-wide and cross-sector collaboration, within Europe and through transcontinental partnerships, that can ensure sustainable global touring practices.

7. Balancing Artistic Innovation and Audience Expectation

Artistic risk is essential for the evolution of the sector, but it can sometimes alienate audiences. There is a tension between creating spaces where artistic experimentation can thrive and presenting work that ensures strong audience engagement. Incorporating cross-cultural collaborations will help diversify programming while maintaining audience interest and participation.

Recommendations

1. Prioritise Sustainable Practices in Dance

Networks, festivals and artistic teams in the dance sector should create and publicise clear and realistic policies that address sustainable practices relating to the environment, professional working conditions, and the development of audiences and the sector. These organisations should also promote international collaboration and a holistic definition of sustainability through sharing best practice, including concrete recommendations for touring and residencies.

2. Create New Funding Models

National, regional and local governments, along with cultural organisations, should establish sustainable, cohesive, flexible and long-term funding that supports artists at all stages of their careers including mid-career and established artists, experimental work, and festivals. This should also encourage and enable international and transcontinental collaborations, and support the financial security of festivals, companies and artists over the medium and long term. Additionally, efforts should be made to secure valuable and consistent private funding.

3. Increase Accessibility and Visibility

Festivals and dance companies should support outdoor and open-air productions to increase access and connect with broader audiences. Enhancing and leveraging the capabilities of digital platforms for showcasing dance, along with targeted outreach efforts through community groups to reach underserved communities, can help shift contemporary dance towards becoming more visible and accessible across Europe and beyond.

4. Advance Diversity and Inclusion

Organisations should embrace research and learning opportunities in order to better understand how to improve diversity in programming and leadership. Festivals have the potential to welcome artists and audiences with a wide range of backgrounds, abilities and perspectives, and should put specific focus on initiatives that support underrepresented groups, and facilitate transcontinental collaborations in order to enrich the artform.

5. Strengthen Political Advocacy for the Arts

Dance must remain a strong advocate for inclusivity, solidarity, and artistic freedom. Networks like the Dance Festivals Network Europe (DanceFestNet), the European Dance Development Network (EDN), and other performing arts networks should engage with policymakers to safeguard the sector and ensure that dance continues to serve as a platform for social change and global dialogue.

6. Innovate Collaboration and Touring Models

The sector must develop new collaboration models, both within the sector as well as across other sectors, that focus on sharing resources, embracing digital tools, and adopting sustainable touring practices. Horizontal collaboration models, which encourage shared responsibility and creativity across all regions of Europe and beyond, should be promoted, ensuring that dance remains a vital global artform.

7. Balancing Artistic Risk with Audience Engagement

Festivals must create spaces for artistic experimentation while also ensuring audiences feel connected and engaged through innovative communication and creative activities and events. By fostering cross-cultural collaborations, embracing innovative programming, and effective audience and market research, festivals aim to enrich their offerings and foster deeper connections with audiences while maintaining artistic integrity.

Partner Festivals / Institutions of Big Pulse Dance Alliance:

Tanz im August/HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Germany),
Dance Umbrella (UK), **Dublin Dance Festival** (Ireland),
Julidans (The Netherlands), **New Baltic Dance** (Lithuania),
ONE Dance Festival (Bulgaria), **Torinodanza Festival** (Italy),
Zodiak – Side Step Festival (Finland), **Sismògraf Dance
Festival** (Catalonia – Spain), **International Dance Festival
TANEC PRAHA** (The Czech Republic), **CODA Oslo
International Dance Festival** (Norway) and **Danscentrum
Sverige** (Sweden)

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