

GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS

#MeToo in the Arts: From call-outs to structural change

Research-informed recommendations for network organisations on combating sexual harassment and power abuse in the European cultural sector

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LEADER ON "GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS":

IETM
19 Square Saintelette
1000 Brussels
Belgium
ietm@ietm.org
www.ietm.org/en

AUTHORS:

Marta Keil (IETM)
Katie Kheriji-Watts (OTM)

RESEARCH, INTERVIEWS:

Yohann Floch (FACE)
Naomi Pohl (IMC)

OVERALL COORDINATION:

Marie Le Sourd (OTM)

CASE STUDIES:

Anna Majewska (OTM)
Fairouz Tamimi (TEH)
John Ellingsworth (OTM)

EDITOR:

Ása Richardsdóttir (IETM)

READING SUGGESTIONS:

We recommend that you download the publication and open it using a pdf reader. You can then click on the web links and consult the resources. Alternatively, you can also copy and paste with a right click the web links of the resources that interest you in your browser's URL field. As this guide is quite long, we advise you not to print it.

SHIFT PROJECT COORDINATOR:

European Music Council
www.emc-imc.org

TOOLS PRODUCED FOR SHIFT FULLY AVAILABLE ONLINE:

www.shift-culture.eu

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FULLY AVAILABLE ON THE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE BASE:

www.artsmetric.com/project-resources/shift

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Linus Rudolph
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THIS IS SHIFT

The 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and are the “to-do list” for the entire world until 2030. The aims of these SDGs “are to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere”. Although culture and arts have not been integrated as an explicit goal, we believe that the cultural and creative sectors have a key role in shaping the transition to more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable societies without leaving anyone behind. Culture and arts are fundamental and transversal in their capacity to support behavioural changes and mobilise collective engagement. As we still demand culture and arts to be integrated in the international agenda post 2030, its role can already be integrated by promoting knowledge to citizens as well as being a tool of the successful implementation of all the 17 SDGs and its targets.

The project SHIFT - Shared Initiatives For Training, co-funded as “Strategic Partnership” by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union - was initiated by nine cultural networks:

- European Choral Association – Europa Cantat - ECA-EC
- ELIA - globally connected European network for higher arts education
- European Music Council - EMC
- European Union of Music Competitions for Youth - EMCY
- Fresh Arts Coalition Europe - FACE
- IETM – International network for contemporary performing arts
- International Music Council - IMC
- On The Move - OTM
- Trans Europe Halles - TEH

These networks recognised the need to join forces to work on the global agenda of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and its leaders wished to improve their capacity for giving guidance to their teams, organisations, and members.

It was asked how to tackle the global challenges recognised in the SDGs such as climate change, gender equality, and inclusion of minorities.

Although these challenges are not new and have been part of the work of the SHIFT partners for a long time, it was agreed by the participating organisations that these topics were not yet taken from a leadership point of view. Three SDGs have been selected as starting points to activate change and increase the cultural sectors' awareness on the sustainable goals:

- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 13: Climate Action

Even though the partners have decided to focus on three SDGs, there is a clear connection between these SDGs. Working on achieving one goal will have a positive impact on others such as good health and well-being (3), decent work and economic growth (8), sustainable cities and communities (11), life below water and on land (14 and 15).

At the same time, the partners are aware that there might be conflicting recommendations to achieve the different goals. To give a very simple but vivid example: One graphic style might be particularly eco-friendly because it would use a very small amount of ink and be produced with less energy, but the same style might not be barrier-free and might be difficult to read for people with visual impairments. All the recommendations therefore have to be contextualised and used with high sensitivity.

The overarching work on cultural leadership has enabled the partners to develop and discover various ways of leading and supporting change to achieve these goals. It was crucial to give tools to leaders to be able to weigh out values and find a path making sense for their organisation, at the time of taking the decision while being aware of different other paths possible.

The partners are happy to share with you the researched and developed material on the four themes of SHIFT: cultural leadership, environmental sustainability, gender and power-relations, and inclusion. **Enjoy!**

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication is the culmination of the SHIFT project's work on Gender and Power Relations. This topic encompasses complex issues, both in society at large and in the cultural sector. In light of developments since 2017, when the #MeToo movement rose to global prominence, the SHIFT partners made a common decision to focus on sexual harassment and power abuse in the European art world.

Our work has been threefold. The first step was a pilot project, initiated by ELIA – globally connected European network for higher arts education¹ and IETM, as a way to explore how to approach these sensitive topics. The pilot involved a survey conducted amongst ELIA members, in-depth interviews with some key ELIA members, and an on-line seminar held in November 2020 during ELIA's biennial conference.² Based on the initial results of this pilot, the second step was to research a sample of sexual harassment and power abuse cases that have been revealed and discussed in the European arts field in recent years. The third step was to use that research as a basis to propose solutions-oriented strategies for creating equitable and safe professional environment for art workers.

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GUIDE TO TERMINOLOGY

In this report, we refer to the notion of **#SEXUAL HARASSMENT** as defined in the EU Directive 2002/73/EC16:

#HARASSMENT is said to occur “where an unwanted conduct related to the sex of a person occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”

#SEXUAL HARASSMENT is “where any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”

Additionally, we acknowledge that sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that can be experienced by anyone, no matter their gender identification, sexual orientation, job description, social status, level of experience, or age (among other factors).

When it comes to the term **#ABUSE OF POWER**, we refer to a definition proposed by Ilse Ghekiere, an artist and activist. Based on her research for Engagement Art, a Belgian movement against sexism in the arts³ that she co-initiated, she writes that:

#POWER ABUSE is a form of systematic wrongdoing in a professional context, which affects the performance of professional duties negatively. Abuse of power can also mean a person using the power they have for their own personal gain.⁴

It is important to keep in mind that the roots of gender-based violence are often tied to the ideologies behind patriarchy, racism, and colonialism. These forms of widespread discrimination and violence are intertwined, and those seeking effective, far-reaching solutions will need to understand and address this. Individual testimonies should not be heard as exceptional, singular stories, but as symptoms of larger, historical dynamics present in many societies.

Finally, throughout this document you will repeatedly encounter the term **#ART WORKERS**. We use this term intentionally as a way to insist upon and make visible the many types of skilled labor necessary for cultural production.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

This publication is based on diverse resources collected within a four-month period (June-September 2021) and enriched by two feedback sessions.

Our research has focused on:

- Existing documentation on sexual harassment and power abuse
- Analysis of a selection of internal documents within arts organisations (such as codes of conducts).
- Interviews, conducted between June and September 2021, with 23 art workers encompassing a variety of professional roles (leaders, teachers, curators...) and who were proposed by the SHIFT partners.
- Exchanges with the arts sector through a) an online session that was held on October 6th, 2021 and that gathered 57 participants to discuss the first three takeaways of our research and b) an in-person session during the IETM Plenary Meeting in Lyon, France on October 22nd, 2021 and which was attended by 63 IETM members and art workers in addition to local university students studying cultural management or arts.

This publication seeks to highlight several major takeaways from our research, provide examples of organisational change through more detailed case studies, and give concrete recommendations based on our numerous discussions with art workers across Europe.

The collected stories cover, in particular, countries that are usually less “on the spot” when it comes to #MeToo cases (especially those in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe), with the aim of providing a more balanced and contextualised picture of the current situation across the continent. Out of the 23 interviews we conducted over the course of this research, close to 40% of them were with professionals from the Central, Eastern, and Southern European countries. This choice was driven by a desire to counterbalance the numerous publications, articles, and tools that are usually more related to Western contexts and that are collected in this report’s Annotated Bibliography.⁵

The majority of our interviewees work primarily in the performing arts, including music. Several visual arts professionals were also interviewed as well as people who work across disciplines. Additionally, a significant number (14 out of 23) of the stories we collected were from art academies and universities.

Our work is by no means comprehensive, although we have done our best to acknowledge and consider the existing socio-political differences across Europe’s nations and regions. We have chosen to see that diversity as a strength to be harnessed rather than an obstacle; a strength which enables collective dialogue and organising around complex and sensitive issues.

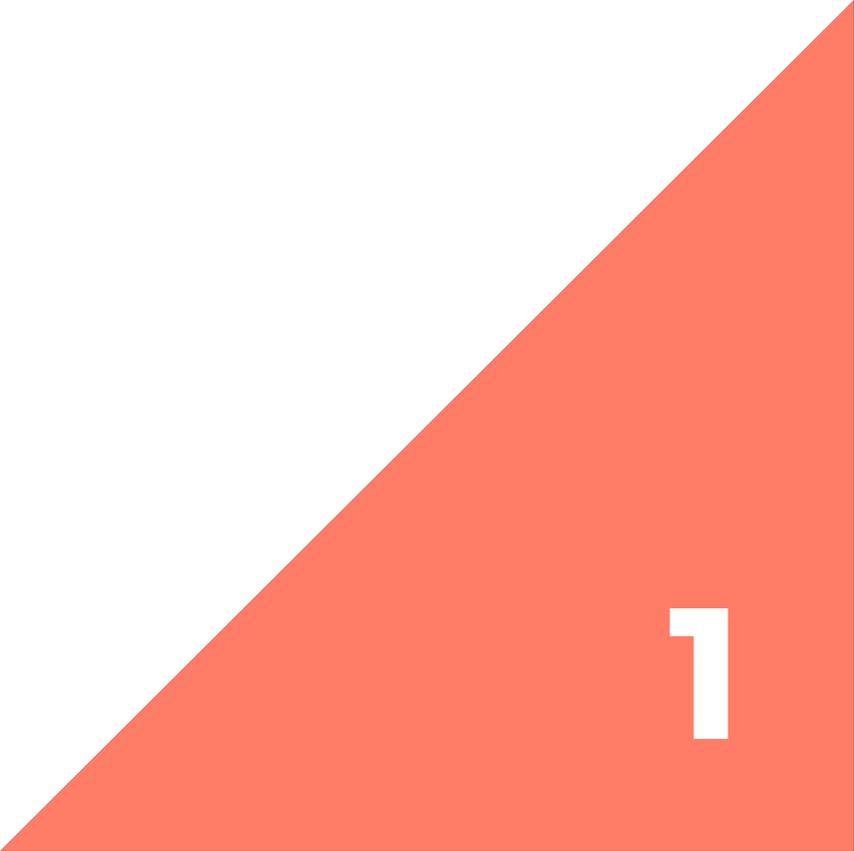
STRUCTURE

This publication is divided into three major sections including one Annex:

1. Main observations that aim to nuance some preconceptions while taking into consideration the diversity of contexts in Europe.
2. Recommendations for the arts sector in general and European cultural networks in particular. Proposals are practical, feasible, solutions-oriented, and aim to be sources of inspiration for anyone interested in leading change in their own organisation, regardless of scale.
3. Concise case studies derived from interviews meant to identify “stories of change”, cases which have recently been tackled and widely discussed in the culture sector and that instigated a broader, structural process of change in a given context. Considering our limiting timeframe, the choice of these case studies were motivated by four main reasons: to have a thorough example on art education, to have an example from the independent sector, to have an example from the music sector and to provide a more insight view on the actual prevention methods that were implemented in one field (in this case: art education).
We received authorisation from our interviewees to present these case studies publicly in this document.

Additional resources are listed throughout this publication in [endnotes](#) that you can click on and refer to while reading the publication.

We also encourage readers to consult the above mentioned Annotated Bibliography that lists more than 50 policy documents, codes of conducts, campaigns on the subject, and other resources.



1

MAIN OBSERVATIONS

1) The #MeToo movement in Europe is far from being homogeneous.

The global #MeToo movement, which started in 2017, increased awareness and empowered employees and professionals across the globe to report sexual harassment and other inequalities in the workplace. #MeToo brought to the surface the vulnerability and a lack of effective protection mechanisms for anyone facing power abuse, regardless of age, class, or gender. The movement's pace, scope, and outcomes vary from country to country and are often embedded in a particular geopolitical context.

At the outset of our research, we assumed, the timelines and context of national and regional #MeToo movements would vary, on a European scale. Our research has shown stark differences, mainly between countries in Western and Northern Europe and those in the Southern and Eastern parts of the continent.

In some of the Northern or Western countries, the #MeToo movement in the performing arts field reached public attention in 2017 and 2018. In Sweden in 2017, nearly 600 actresses signed a letter of protest against sexual harassment and power abuse in theatre and film sector. Equally, 587 women in film and performing arts in Iceland, signed a petition⁶ under the title *The Curtain Falls* in November 2017, demanding responsibility and change by authorities, theatres and production companies. Women in several professions in Iceland collected testimonials of sexual harassment and power abuse in autumn 2017, leading to a public reading and live broadcast⁷ of testimonies at the Reykjavik City Theatre, on December 10th, the final day of a 16 day long campaign by the United Nations, against gender based violence. In Belgium, an open letter⁸ to choreographer Jan Fabre and his production company Troubleyn, written by former employees and apprentices and published in September 2018, became a turning point for a debate around the sexual harassment, sexism and power abuse in local performing arts field and has led to a pending court case.

Outside of Northern and Western Europe, examples of collective organising against sexual harassment in the arts exist but, until recently, they have been rarer and limited in scope. However, while working on this research during

2021, we have observed a peak of #MeToo momentum in the performing arts field in Central, Eastern, and Southern European countries.

In January and February 2021, cases of sexual harassment and power abuse were reported at the Academy for Theatre and Film (AGRFT) in Slovenia, at the Art Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, at the Dance Department of the Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków, at the National Theatre in Athens, at the Academy of Dramatic Arts of the University in Zagreb, and at the private acting school Matter Of The Heart run by Serbian actor Miroslav Aleksic. The process continued: in June 2021 a group at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague Theatre Faculty (DAMU), who created a performance *Nemusíš to vydržet!* (You don't have to endure it!) addressed power abuse at their school. A large debate followed in the media and led to the formulation of a code of conduct, a prevention and information campaign and disciplinary procedures and legal hearings. In many cases, the testimonies first appeared in the public sphere (in both traditional and social media) before they were addressed by the respective institutions.⁹

We have observed that a current backlash against gender equality¹⁰ in some parts of Eastern and Southern Europe makes the discussion about gender-based violence even more challenging than before.

For instance, as one of our interviewees underlined, in Eastern Europe the risk of public discourse being hijacked by right-wing extremists is high. Some conservative authorities argue that social progress (related for instance, to gender equality or LGBTQ+ communities rights) amounts to "self-colonisation" with ideas imported from the West, such as a supposed obsession with political correctness.

2) The process of change is often resource-intensive and complex.

Changing an organisation's work culture, creating new policies and putting them into place, and investigating with care allegations of harassment and abuse take time to be done effectively.

For several of the people we spoke to during the course of our research, the necessity of responding to specific allegations of inappropriate and harmful behaviour was the catalyst behind their organisation beginning to take seriously the need for change. Part of that process may include first understanding what has already come to pass and what mechanisms within the organisation allowed for interpersonal violence to occur. Depending on the gravity of the situation, there may also be a legal or judicial investigation taking place with which the organisation and some of its constituents will need to cooperate.

Examining reported cases can be complex, logistically overwhelming, emotionally fraught, and take a long time to produce tangible results. A multi-step process might consist of careful listening, considering different points of view, discussing possible misunderstandings, deciding on appropriate sanctions, and searching for ways to offer healing from **moral injury**. Many of our interviewees, who have been directly involved in examining and attempting to solve cases of sexual harassment or power abuse, addressed the problem of exhaustion. Sometimes, this exhaustion was due to the fact that staff members - often women - were asked to take part in an investigative process on top of their regular workload, without being given additional time or financial compensation to do so.

One thing was repeatedly highlighted during our interviews: the need for external support when assessing claims, especially from people who have expertise in psychology, law, and human resources as well as from those who have special training in conflict mediation and resolution (sometimes referred to as "ombudspersons"). When an organisation lacks the budget to pay for such expertise, leaders will sometimes turn to their personal network for help (ex: "our board president knew a lawyer who could help us out").

According to our research, many of these investigative processes broadened to include internal reviews centered around the question of how the organisation's current structure, hierarchies, work culture, policies, and internal

competencies (or lack thereof) contributed to allowing a person in a position of power to victimise others. For several of our interviewees, this meant leaning on existing (often outdated) sexual harassment policies or, sometimes, finding out that no such policies existed within their organisations. Thus, part of the internal review process often includes the necessity of adapting existing policy so that it can be meaningfully put into place, or even writing guidelines and procedures for the first time.

Creating or adapting policy that works as a useful, evolving tool may involve consultation with staff, board members, contractors, freelancers, students, artists, peer organisations, and external advisors.

Precise vocabulary, accurate definitions, and clear articulations are crucial, and they need time to be formulated, agreed upon, accepted, and adopted. Tools that are meant to act against sexual harassment and power abuse - such as codes of conduct, hotlines, or training - only work if they are understood and put into everyday practice by the majority of an organisation's community, no matter its scope.

Many people we spoke to highlighted that the process of change was just as important as the results produced. Codes, procedures, and tools all play a key role in preventing gender based violence, but the discussions leading to their creation or re-formulation seem just as crucial, as this is when the actual shifts in perspective occur. This observation resonates with the remark made by the Icelandic prime minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, and shared in 2019 just before an international #MeToo conference in Reykjavik: "To use my own party as an example, we have formulated new rules for how to behave, but the most important thing has been the discussion around the rules, not the rules per se. There are so many negative things buried in our culture which we never talked about before."¹¹

3) Precarious working conditions are fertile breeding grounds for harassment and abuse.

Even if sexual harassment can happen to anyone regardless of their professional situation, poor working conditions can - and often do - increase one's risk of being harassed or abused. A person who is precariously employed and who has scarce financial, relational, or reputational resources is often disempowered to say "no" to exploitative situations and to speak up in the face of inappropriate behavior. This seems to be especially true of independent artists, freelance cultural workers, young professionals, students, and immigrants.

A recurring remark shared during several interviews is that a prevailing feeling of insecurity (financial, social, political...) diminishes one's capacity to impact change. As Ian Manborde from Equity, a union of performers and creative practitioners¹² in the United Kingdom, firmly stated during the online session focusing in the first takeaways of this research:

"Unless we address the lack of minimal financial support, we won't be able to address the overall abusive character of the culture sector."¹³

And as Ilse Ghekiere, one of the co-initiators of Engagement Art, a Belgian movement¹⁴ against sexism in the arts, further explains: "Abuse of power is a type of oppression strongly defined by hierarchical relationships, and it is often linked to precarious working conditions, such as a non-standard employment characterized by low payment, insecurity, exploitation and lack of legal protection. These conditions might help to establish a culture of silence. When people are afraid to lose their job, they remain silent and so enable the abuse of power to be normalised and continued."¹⁵

The fear of having one's career be negatively affected if one speaks up about inappropriate behavior begins, for many, during their arts education. Many traditional learning environments in which people are trained to become art workers are structured, almost by definition, around strict hierarchies between instructors (who are often also active professionals and sometimes have significant acclaim) and students. The potential for power abuse within a classroom

- and within a professional arts context writ large - are rarely directly addressed at schools. As explained by Petra van Brabandt, a philosopher, art theoretician, and lecturer at Sint Lucas Antwerpen in Belgium, "Power relations are often not discussed explicitly in education. Nevertheless, they are an inherent part of any institution, artistic practices included. We should have the courage to discuss fair working conditions, the risks of power, and the different forms that abuse of power can take. Art education and art production take place in a context of work and production, but these more profane aspects of art, people prefer to keep hidden away behind the scenes. Here art education fails and because of its failure, young adults are exposed to ignorance and abuse."¹⁶

On a broader level, some in the #MeToo movement have asked whether widespread notions of what it means to "be a boss" have contributed to a tacit acceptance of suffering in the workplace. This point of view is shared by Nika Kovač, director of The 8th of March Institute and one of the initiators of the Slovenian #jastudi (#MeToo) campaign¹⁷. In the introduction to a 2019 publication, she highlights that the notion of "a boss" is deeply entangled with patriarchal and capitalist way of understanding the position of power and points out "The victims of this type of modern patriarchy are all, regardless of gender: how many emotionally and sexually developed adults suffer from the supremacy of such a capricious 'boss,' political leader, religious leader ...?"¹⁸

4) Increased understanding of what contributes to violence and inequity is leading some to think differently about art.

Raising social awareness and opening public debate is needed in order to define and understand what kind of behaviours are transgressive, abusive, or violent. A good example was brought by a Spanish sociologist, prof. Marta Soler, invited to give a lecture at the Faculty of the Arts, University of Ljubljana, while the students' group Resitenza and the Faculty members were working on methods to prevent sexual harassment and power abuse at their school. She recalled a research conducted at University of Barcelona, showing that when students were asked if they have ever encountered gender based violence, only 13% admitted they did. But when the researchers asked about particular gestures or actions, defined by EU regulations as transgressive behaviour, 67% answered they experienced it.

An observation often made during our interviews is that in the educational environment, a lack of understanding what kind of behaviour can be violent or transgressive leads some instructors to perceive certain students' opinions as overreaction. Other pedagogues admitted that the understanding of transgressive behaviour and sexual harassment was different when they were students themselves. Meanwhile, as our interviewees underlined, what has changed is not only the definition of gender based violence, but also the definition of art - and what is allowed "in the name of art".

When it comes to raising awareness in the culture sector, the roles of curators, critics, researchers, programmers and producers is important, as they value art practices, decide on artists' visibility, influence the way the artistic practices are perceived and decide from which perspective they are described.

After the publication of the open letter to Troubleyn/Jan Fabre, written by his (former) performers, Petra van Brabandt addressed art workers (including herself), who are responsible for building the art canon: "Essentially, this letter is addressed to all of us. The art schools, the cultural and artistic institutions, the Ministers of Culture and Education. Media makers and artists, programmers, journalists and art critics. As a teacher at an art school, I feel addressed personally. We have to introduce new paradigms, ideals and role models in our schools. Art as the practice of a few individual 'masters' has always been a model for abuse."¹⁹

5) Supportive leaders are instrumental to structural change.

#MeToo is a grassroots movement and it is important to recognise the significance of its “bottom-up” mobilisation. However, in our research, we observed that impactful, structural change was made possible when instigators were able to meaningfully cooperate with people that held power within organisations.

This has been shown to be particularly true within arts education, although we think that the example they provide can be relevant to other types of organisations. Several of our interviewees working in arts education (for example, Roman Kuhar, dean of Faculty of Arts, University of Slovenia, Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, ombudswoman at The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw and Jasna Žmak, Student Support Coordinator at Academy of Dramatic Arts, University of Zagreb) pointedly said that their organisation would not have meaningfully evolved without the initiative and determination of students. And these same people also pointed out they felt lucky to be in an organisation that was led by people who listened to testimonies, welcomed discussion, and facilitated the change process.

On the other hand, one of our interviewees pointed at a situation in the art institution they worked in, where the will to change was quite limited: the leadership was willing to meet the expectations of funders by preparing required preventive procedures, but was not interested in putting them into practice. As a consequence, some of the employees decided to facilitate a change on their own, starting from their department, but were aware the process will have a limited impact on the whole institution unless it is actively supported by the leaders.

Being an organisational leader with a high-level of responsibility can be an isolating experience for many people. Sometimes, as part of the change process, they can themselves feel that they become the targets of generalised frustration or anger, becoming representative of an entire system of which they may only be partially an architect. For example, one organisational leader that we interviewed described feeling “singled-out” during the process of addressing a problem of gender-based violence in their context. “I was told many times that ‘I need to go,’” they said. “For me, #MeToo symbolised becoming a target.” Because of this social isolation and emotional risk, leaders themselves need support in order to continue to be effective facilitators of structural change within their organisations. Another of our interviewees suggested that cultural networks could play an important part in increasing connections and solidarity, allowing leaders to have a solid selection of peers to turn to when facing difficult situations and to whom they could offer advice.

6) (Social) media plays an important role, while also being ambiguous and paradoxical.

Although #MeToo came to global prominence in 2017, it is important to remember that, beyond a social media hashtag, it began “as a grassroots movement to aid sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities.”²⁰ Tarana Burke, who originally began to use the phrase in 2006 as part of her activism and community organising work, has said that “it wasn’t built to be a viral campaign that is here today and forgotten tomorrow. It was a catchphrase to be used from survivor to survivor to let folks know that they were not alone and that a movement for radical healing was happening and possible.”

This ambiguity with regards to the role of media - social and otherwise - was highlighted repeatedly over the course of our research.

Popular online platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok are spaces in which stories of sexual harassment and power abuse often first emerge and circulate. For instance, the Instagram handle @myartnotmyass is a collectively-run account that invites the anonymous sharing of experiences of being the target of inappropriate behaviour and/or speech in the French contemporary art world. Perhaps because of the audience demographics of the app, many of the personal testimonies invoke being mistreated because of one’s status as a student, as an intern, as a visibly young professional, or as an emerging artist. However, as one of our interviewees pointed out, stories that circulate widely on social media, especially when they are shared anonymously, do not always reach people who lead and hold power in organisations.

Some of the people we interviewed have been involved in cases that have received attention from traditional media outlets. This type of exposure - or the threat of it - can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, press coverage can serve as a form of pressure on organisational leaders to take visible actions towards reparation, justice, and prevention. On the other hand the potential of causing “bad PR” for one’s workplace or school sometimes served as an inhibiting factor for victims coming forward with their stories. This point is also tied in with a fear of losing the narrative of what one has lived through by being stigmatized, victim-blamed, or disbelieved in public forums.

One person that we spoke with highlighted an important point: the general pace of the news cycle is increasingly frantic and mainstream outlets often prioritize short, “easily digestible” information formats to the detriment of nuance. Combined with recent revelations that social media algorithms and business models “incentivize angry, polarizing, divisive content,”²¹ this is clearly at odds with our second takeaway: that investigating with care allegations of harassment and abuse takes time. In the words of another interviewee, “lynching people on social media shouldn’t be considered as a sustainable solution.”

While mapping the cases of sexual harassment and power abuse that were publicly reported in the arts in Europe between 2017 and 2021, we observed two interdependent dynamics:

- the arena of public debate, which is often irrigated by cases that have been made visible through traditional media outlets and/or online social platforms
- the ongoing, longterm, often invisible work of preparing, facilitating, and maintaining momentum for the process of change, that happens out of the spotlight and often does not give quick results that can be easily or sensationally communicated

Each of these arenas of engagement inform and strengthen the other. Many of the people that we interviewed stressed that media pressure and public attention, although at times very stressful, effectively contributed to addressing sexual harassment and power abuse. However, they also pointed out that while cases that have been made public can be a useful observational tool, they are not exhaustive. On the contrary: the information that we have access to through (social) media is rather the tip of an iceberg.

2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
EUROPEAN CULTURAL
NETWORKS

We asked ourselves three main questions when formulating these recommendations:

1. How do we want to work in the arts field after the testimonies we have heard, bearing in mind that precarious work conditions increase one's vulnerability to harassment and abuse ?
2. How can we act collaboratively and in solidarity on an international level to create safer working spaces in the arts, while also taking into consideration different socio-political contexts across Europe ?
3. What can or should be the specific roles of European cultural networks, especially with regards to mobilising the arts sector and campaigning for better laws and regulations ?

Our recommendations:

- have been written with a desire to move towards structural change in the arts on a large scale;
- are based on what we learned during the research process (including two 'feedback sessions' with European art workers and IETM members);
- aim to be practical and feasible, regardless of the size and scope of your organisation;
- are each linked to a 'discussion point' that can be used as a starting question for collective conversation as you begin or deepen a process of change;
- do not claim to be fully comprehensive regarding what could be done to combat sexual harassment and power abuse in the arts;
- while they primarily address European cultural networks, may be of relevance to and provide inspiration for leaders working in other types of arts organisations.

1) Put time and effort into formulating and building consensus around precise terminology.

Why?

- Precise and specific descriptions of what exactly constitutes sexual harassment, power abuse, and gender-based violence in the cultural workplace are needed at organisational, local, and European levels.
- Clear descriptions can help to differentiate between intentionally predatory behaviour and unintentionally hurtful actions born from (cultural/contextual) ignorance or a lack of emotional education.
- Regardless of the scale and scope of an organisation (or a consortium of them), the process of democratising contributions, of articulating the meanings behind certain terms, of (re) writing and contextualising definitions based on feedback and dialogue, and of communicating the results of this work with the goal of widespread understanding and adoption will take time and effort.

Recommendations

- Spend time elaborating your own definitions of certain terms so that they are as precise as possible. Be prepared to regularly revisit them in collaboration with coworkers, constituents (board members, students, freelancers, etc.), and peer organisations. Revise them when necessary and according to lived experiences.
- Share the fruits of your work with others. Consider how to make these explicitly defined terms easily accessible to anyone who would like to read them. Ask yourselves if they should be translated into other languages.

Discussion point

- Sexual harassment and power abuse sometimes occur in places that are outside of the official purview of an organisation (such as a private residence, or a bar or restaurant). What can or should be done, by an organisation, about inappropriate behaviour that can – and often does – happen in such “grey zones” ?

2) Work towards creating a sector-wide standard for arts leaders to receive formal training in creating safe professional environments.

Why?

- Often, artistic directors are tasked with leading an organisation despite lacking formal training in people management. It seems to be common that hiring committees assume that high-level, complex skills such as facilitating teams and working relations can be learned ad hoc in addition to artistic responsibilities.
- At times, artistic values (be they explicit or implicit) can clash with standards of professional behaviour. In certain disciplines, the perception of an artistic leader as an all-knowing “master” or a “creative genius,” can lead to situations in which abuse and harassment are tolerated in the name of art.
- Interpersonal relations and emotions often play a significant role in the creative process and sometimes there is a perception that coworkers form “a family.” This mindset can hinder confronting situations of harassment and abuse.

Recommendations

- Offer training for existing organisational leaders in the arts. Consider inviting highly experienced NGOs, artist-led movements (for example Engagement²²) and fair practice initiatives (such as Just is Just²³ or Fair Practice Code²⁴) to facilitate them.
- As part of the hiring process for top organisational leaders in the arts, ask candidates to demonstrate competencies related to their ability to create and maintain a safe workplace. When interviewing, ask questions that reveal how a person would concretely manage a situation of abuse or harassment. Consider offering executive training as part of a hiring package if the person you wish to employ in this position lacks key competencies in this area.

Discussion point

- In your context, how widespread is the perception of an artistic leader as an all-knowing “master” or a “creative genius”? How does this mindset influence the way that arts organisations are structured?

3) Understand how precarious working conditions increase vulnerability to potential abuse. And take action!

Why?

- Precarious working conditions of cultural workers (financial insecurity, predatory contract clauses, competitive atmospheres, unsafe work spaces...) are fertile breeding grounds for harassment and abuse of all kinds in the arts.
- Many arts professionals do not speak up about being abused or harassed in the cultural workplace. Often this is because they fear that, if they do, they will be retaliated against or punished (losing jobs, having their reputation tarnished, losing visa privileges...).

Recommendations

- As an organisation, in addition to working with staff members, be proactive in addressing the needs of independent artists, freelance cultural workers, young professionals, and students. Many of them operate with little or no 'safety net.' Some may also lack knowledge as to what constitutes abuse or harassment and have very little experience in handling such situations.
- Consider getting your organisation certified by an independent entity (such as W.A.G.E²⁵) with regards to fair remuneration for arts workers.

Discussion point

- Has your organisation ever used the power of its reputation to push for an arts worker to accept a low fee or wage and/or for contract conditions that clearly put them at a disadvantage?

4) Prioritise long-term, structural work on gender equity and diversity within your sector.

Why?

- In many contexts, gender equity and diversity is seen as a "nice to have," something that is addressed only after "core activities" have been taken care of. Thinking of this work as long-term and structural means that it might (and probably will) infuse many aspects of organisational life as part of an ongoing process of change.
- Like many "socially-engaged" topics that go through cycles of trendiness, there is a risk that tackling sexual harassment and power abuse in the arts on a structural level becomes a lower priority within organisations once public attention has waned.

Recommendations

- Ensure gender equity and diversity is foundational to your organisation's activities, not a box to be ticked once in a while.
- Pay attention to who is in the room and to how they have a seat at the table.²⁶
- Offer workshops on discrimination to staff, network members, board members, students, and external collaborators.
- Organise regular meetings with your network that focus on sharing good practices, resources, stories of change, advocacy campaigns, etc. Such meetings should be seen as a starting point for collective organising and creating broad support for structural change in the face of resistance and potential backlash.

Discussion point

- How might your artistic programming and/or educational curriculum need to shift in order to prioritise gender equity and diversity? What would it look like for the values embedded in this artistic and/or educational content to inform concrete, internal changes within your organisation?

5) Set aside a dedicated budget for training and for specialists.

Why?

- Many arts organisations do not have staff positions that explicitly and wholly focus on Human Relations and often lack strong internal competencies in this key area.
- People who are most likely to be the targets of gender-based violence are also most likely to be the ones asked to work on preventing or solving harassment, often on top of their 'normal' workloads and without additional compensation.
- Emerging specialist roles – such as **intimacy coordinators** for film and theatre productions – can set, **in the words of the artist Michaela Coel**, “physical, emotional, and professional boundaries, so that we can make work about exploitation, loss of respect, about abuse of power, without being exploited or abused in the process.”

Recommendations

- Consider creating a staff position that focuses on workplace safety, the prevention of harm, knowledge-building within the organisation at large, and compliance with the law and regulations.
- Campaign for the establishment of a dedicated European fund that would help small organisations to contract specialists (such as legal counsellors and psychologists) when needed.

Discussion point

- Does your organisation have sufficient resources to cover its needs in this area without overburdening team members? How can you address this with your board, employees, stakeholders, members and funders?

6) The support of European cultural networks is needed to foster structural change on the transnational level.

Why?

- Social awareness and access to legal recourse to react varies by country, art sector, institutional landscape, and working status. It is therefore crucial to look for solutions that can be applied transnationally and to develop a network of solidarity between arts institutions, organisations and individuals across borders.
- Many people we spoke to strongly expressed the need for a database listing codes of conduct, legal solutions, and methodologies that are already applied or are being worked out.
- There is a lack of cooperation at a European level around creating the working conditions that would help to prevent abuse, especially for art workers who are reliant on international mobility (such as artists who tour their work).
- External pressure can be helpful at the international level. A good example of external pressure from funding bodies comes from the UK. Ian Manborde, Equality & Diversity Organiser at Equity, explained during the online IETM session on the 6th of October 2021²⁷: “Previously in order to get financial support culture sector organisations in UK had to have a prevention policy against sexual harassment and power abuse on their shelves; from 2022 they will have to provide evidence that they put it into practice and actively address abusive behaviour”.²⁸

Recommendations

European cultural networks could:

In terms of meetings, training and facilitation:

- Commit to consistently addressing sexual harassment and power abuse and raising awareness about the issue. For example, by regularly addressing these topics at gatherings and meetings.
- Provide safe spaces for discussions, research, training and workshops in a consistent manner, especially taking into consideration activists and professionals involved in change processes who cannot count on local support. An example would be encouraging and supporting working groups across networks where members can meet to gain mutual support, share experiences, and assess transformation processes.
- Instigate informal, voluntary one-on-one consultations among members to share stories and advice, particularly between more experienced professionals and emerging ones.
- Go beyond knowledge sharing and work on capacity building. For example, offer training that would allow arts professionals to identify the behaviours associated with power abuse and sexual harassment.

- Offer a training-based certification on these topics for members. This could be modelled on the Green certification which several European cultural networks are developing as part of the SHIFT project.²⁹

In terms of information sharing:

- Jointly support creating a central, digital platform housing policies, codes of conduct, and research. The FIA-International Federations of Actors' resources page could be the starting point of such a platform together with the Annotated Bibliography³⁰ produced as part of this project, as well as the relevant content from the anticipated good practice database emerging from the current live performance European Social Partner project on gender equality in the Live Performance sector, concluding in 2022³¹. This webpage should provide links to resources in various languages where available and could actively contribute to and circulate research – for example, by reporting or collecting new case studies and informing members about ongoing developments.
- Establish and ensure to update a list of experts, ombudspersons and trainers at the European level, particularly taking into account countries where there is no free access to professional ombudspersons or external trainers.

In terms of advocacy:

- Join forces to lobby for safer, prevention-focused working conditions at the European level and work (in cooperation with workers' unions and federations) on transnational solutions that could protect freelancers and other art professionals working across borders. For example, push to make EU funding contingent upon an organisation having an up-to-date, internal code of ethics alongside evidence of their active work to create a safe workplace.
- Connect when possible (through exchange of information, etc.) with local and national networks in the arts sector that could further work on the issue. This observation is particularly relevant for European and international networks that are umbrella organisations or 'networks of networks'.
- Continue joining forces across networks advocating for the improvement of working conditions in the cultural sector, including the prevention of sexual harassment and power abuse in the cultural workplace as a key element of policy statements and possible EU actions.

Discussion points

- How can European cultural networks use the inspiration of projects such as Keychange in the music field³² to move forward together, around the topic, on a massive scale?
- How can European cultural networks support activists and arts workers involved in change processes who cannot count on local support? What could cross-border alliances offer in that regard?
- How can European cultural networks keep the discussion going, especially when the #MeToo movement eventually loses its media attention?

HOW TO CONTINUE THE WORK

The networks behind this research hope it will be an important contribution towards moving the dialogue forward on a European scale.

The networks are as much addressing themselves with the list of recommendations as other European and international networks and the arts and cultural sector in general.

We acknowledge the research and the solution strategies discussed are by no means comprehensive and much further work needs to happen. We are committed to this work and we encourage other organisations to join us.

Please email us at ietm@ietm.org if you have any questions or would like to contribute to the work ahead.

3

ANNEX

CASE STUDIES –
STORIES OF CHANGE

1) Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

The following story of change is based on an interview with Roman Kuhar, Dean at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana³³. The discussion about gender-based violence started there in 2020 and was inspired by the #MeToo movement. While in the majority of Western countries the #MeToo campaign was initiated by people who shared their stories on private accounts on social media, in Slovenia the movement took a different form. In 2018 the activist organisation Inštitut 8. Marec (8th of March Institute) launched the campaign #jztudi by providing a platform where testimonies could be shared anonymously. By 2020 over 180 people from every age group had published their stories on the platform. However, there were no testimonies regarding the problem of violence in the cultural sector. Therefore, the Institute, in cooperation with the City of Women Festival, organised another campaign #jztudi v kulturi (#MeToo in culture) and directly contacted Ljubljana-based cultural

The story of change

Students at the Faculty of Arts played a crucial role in drawing attention to the problem of gender-based violence at the University and in creating institutional practices to address it. They were the ones who made it possible for the first sexual harassment complaints to be heard. The process started in 2020, when they established a grassroots organisation, Resistenza, which collected testimonies of students who had experienced violence. That initiative contributed to creating a safe environment for those coming forward with complaints, allowing them to remain anonymous among teachers and authorities at the University by submitting their complaints through trusted peers. Subsequently, they were represented by the Student Council, which remained in contact with the Dean.

In response to the complaints, anti-violence procedures have been put in practice at the University for the first time. Initially, those measures were based on the document "Pravilnik o ukrepih za varovanje dostojanstva zaposlenih na Univerzi v Ljubljani in študentov Univerze v Ljubljani" ("Rules on measures to protect the dignity of employees and students at the University of Ljubljana"), which was created in 2012 to prevent unethical behavior but which in 2020 was still a dead letter. Trying to implement procedures based on that document made clear many of its blind spots and ambiguities. As Kuhar remarks, one of the main problems which they had to address was the question of how and

institutions to collect testimonies. Those actions initiated the discussion around power abuses in the Slovenian performing arts community.

Another initiative which contributed to that discussion was the Facebook group "Nisam tražila", created at the beginning of 2021, after Miroslav Aleksic – director, screenwriter and acting teacher – was accused of sexual harassment. The group started a platform which collects testimonies of gender-based violence in theatre within the countries of former Yugoslavia. Initiated by "Nisam tražila", this regional and international discussion has accelerated changes that were already in motion at the Faculty of Arts, and has allowed students and teachers to perceive their experiences in a broader context.

when the statute of limitations should be applied, given that the majority of complaints could not be brought further due to expiration of university regulations.

As it quickly became clear that the document needed to be revised, authorities at the University started to rewrite it and develop new policies – a process in which students, represented by Resistenza, actively participated. The new code of practices has now been enacted. One of its goals has been to create a framework for student participation in implementing anti-violence procedures. An example of this might be the practice of 'cross-checking' during the evaluation process: at the end of each academic year, students submit evaluation reports which are read simultaneously by heads of departments and the Student Committee. This procedure was established to prevent heads of departments from making biased decisions concerning their colleagues. Another example is that student opinions are solicited as part of the process of renewing a postdoctoral degree (habilitation) which is a condition for maintaining employment. This procedure made it possible for the Dean to refuse to extend a contract with a professor of philosophy who had been repeatedly accused of misconduct and sexual harassment by students and who was found guilty during an internal investigation.

According to Kuhar, including students in the process of shaping institutional practices and guarding against unethical behavior is crucial as they remain the least protected interest group at the University. Therefore, another anti-violence measure was introduced to protect them and support them in their work of organising to collect testimonies while ensuring complainants' anonymity and safety. The University authorities established positions for independent persons of confidence (trained by external specialists and advisors) to whom students and employees can turn directly when they experience violence.

While developing their new code of practices, the University has simultaneously launched an educational and informational campaign. Collaborating with two non-governmental organisations working in the field of domestic violence – Društvo SOS Telefon and Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo – the University organised workshops for all employees and students (especially newcomers) about recognising various forms of violence and abuse of power. In addition, to create a clear sign that the University was becoming a safe space, anti-violence posters were put up around the faculty.

Lessons learned

1. One of the most interesting aspects of this case is that the code of practice did not have to be created from scratch – it had already existed for eight years, but was never implemented until students, influenced by the worldwide #MeToo movement, directed attention to the problem of gender-based violence. It shows that pre-established written regulation cannot change a violent system by itself. Codes of practice should be negotiated and shaped by all social actors who will be affected by them. A code of practice should also be accompanied by diverse and intensive efforts to change institutional culture enforced by the patriarchal system. Therefore, as Kuhar claims, educational practices and informative campaigns might be a way to alter old, destructive institutional habits and power relations, and as such those actions should not be discounted in favor of regulation, but accompanied and enhanced by it.
2. The case of the Faculty of Arts shows that even when institutional power is centralised a grassroots initiative started by the least privileged actors (in this case the students) can be a trigger for change when those actors can organise themselves effectively and find allies (in this case the Dean, who had a previous experience of working in NGOs specialising in issues of domestic violence, and the Rector, who supported him). However, if the personnel at the top of the organisation had been different, students may have faced many more difficulties in altering institutional practices to stop violent behaviors. That is why decentralisation of institutional power and the inclusion of all interest groups (especially the most vulnerable ones) in the process of making and implementing decisions concerning their safety and well-being is and remains an urgent task.

2) Grip, Antwerp, Belgium

The following story of change is based on the interview with Klaartje Oerlemans representing GRIP located in Antwerp, Belgium³⁴. GRIP is an organization for dance – an artistic collective and artist-led organization under the direction of Oerlemans, a business manager and coordinator, and Jan Martens, a choreographer and dancer. Currently, the main focus of GRIP is to produce Martens' own work, but they also support two other choreographers who are involved in the organization. Martens has acted as an artistic leader of the collective in the past, but now GRIP is in the process of changing its leadership structure: soon the institution will be run by Oerlemans, as well as an artistic team consisting of an artistic coordinator and four choreographers. GRIP is a small organization – besides the choreographers and the business manager there are only four other staffers. However, the platform collaborates with a vast and diverse group of freelancers involving a rehearsal director, production dramaturgs, dancers, performers, technicians and many others.

Changes in GRIP have taken place during the vibrant debate around sexual harassment and abuses of power in the Belgian performing arts community. However, during that time the organization has not registered any cases of violence – the decision to implement new procedures followed the collective's belief that they are responsible for creating a safer working environment for the future. The trigger was the 2018 open letter from twenty former employees of Jan Fabre exposing his abusive behavior in the Troubleyn

The story of change

The starting point of the process of change at GRIP was a question of how to shape procedures to ensure workers' wellbeing and make sure all problems can be discussed. When designing those procedures, the collective had to consider the unique power relations that function in such a small institution and in the performing arts field. At GRIP, private and professional life intertwines – some of the workers know each other well, work together very closely during intense creative processes, and often have tight, private relationships. In that kind of working environment reporting power abuses becomes even more challenging, because the only way to make a complaint is to address a person who closely knows a perpetrator. Another issue taken into consideration was the need to protect not only full time employees, but also freelancers whose interests are often overlooked by art organisations. Finally, to address

company. Their public stand became especially important for the workers of GRIP as some of them used to cooperate with Fabre. The letter was followed by the publication of the article Choreographers' Statement. Make a movement: towards solidarity and ethical practices written by choreographers working in Belgium, including GRIP workers – Jan Martens, Bára Sigfúsdóttir and Steven Michel. They expressed support for colleagues from Troubleyn, recognized their experiences as part of a wider structural problem and called for systemic changes in the performing arts sector to address abuse of power and put in place prevention measures. Subsequently, several gatherings were organised which aimed to form a group of people interested in lobbying for change and developing new institutional strategies. According to Oerlemans, the biggest challenge was to keep the dialogue going, because people who participated in the process were overwhelmed by other responsibilities and could no longer fully invest in those actions. Nevertheless, even though they managed to organise only two meetings, plans were made and important conversations happened during that time, which influenced GRIP in the process of developing situated strategies for their own organisation. Those meetings contributed also to broadening the network of people and institutions supporting change in the performing arts sector in Belgium. One of those institutions is OKO which delivered legal support to all organisations in the arts sector during the process of projecting new institutional procedures.

these problems the collective decided to create positions for three confidential advisors – one external and two internal. Initially, the position of external advisor was held by a specialist from IDEWE (an official institution advising organizations on safety at work), while the positions of internal advisors were held by a GRIP office worker alongside one of the freelance dancers working with Jan Martens. Currently, since the internal advisor from the office changed jobs, there are only two advisors – one internal and one external. Each of them acts as a person of confidence available to anyone who experiences a problem in relation to any form of professional cooperation with GRIP. To ensure that the external advisor remains unbiased he or she cannot be a part of the team leading GRIP.

The procedure of reporting a difficult situation at work was intentionally made clear and simple. Both permanent workers and freelancers can choose loosely which one of the advisors they want to address. All of them are available to reach by phone and email. They have to respond within five working days suggesting a date for the first meeting (which may take place live or online). During the first conversation their job is to listen, advise, and inform on further possible actions. After that the complainant can, in consultation with the advisor, either decide that the case should stay informal, or that external mediators should be involved. According to Oerlemans, the first option is implemented when a problem can be solved after one meeting and the second one pertains to more complex situations.

One of the main challenges in making this procedure work is to effectively disseminate information about anti-violence policies among all the people GRIP cooperates with, even if it is only a brief cooperation. The collective discusses their policy with all newcomers, especially freelance workers, who receive access to a shared google drive with all necessary information on that subject, including a folder containing basic information about Belgian labor law and worker rights in the performing arts sector. Once a year during the GRIP Day – a gathering of all GRIP workers – there is a particular opportunity to get to know anti-violence procedures better and discuss working conditions with people engaged in the organization. The meeting starts with a conversation about their wellbeing, their needs, and their experiences of alternative working practices, creating a space to address crucial problems.

Lessons learned

1. Because of the precarious working conditions that many freelancers face in the performing arts sector, they are especially vulnerable to gender-based violence. Considering this problem, it is crucial for art organizations to create strategies for protecting not only permanent workers but also freelance cooperators from abusive behavior, and to offer them simple and clearly communicated procedures for filing complaints.
2. Small organisations often have working environments that reduce professional distance. While performing in the company of friends can create a feeling of support and care, it may also reinforce various modes of exploitation (including self-exploitation) and make it more difficult to oppose violent behaviors. That is why creating positions similar to the external confidant/ advisor at GRIP – a person who is not involved in the institution's own culture and power relations – might be a way to ensure that those who experience violence can receive support from an unbiased professional.

3) Comparison of codes of ethics in three different European educational institutions: the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Theatre Academy in Warsaw, and Iceland University of the Arts.

The following case study is a comparison of anti-violence regulations in three different educational institutions of art – the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Theatre Academy in Warsaw, and Iceland University of the Arts. It will begin with a description of each policy, including its institutional and political context, and be followed by a comparative analysis of the documents.

The aim of this comparison is to emphasize that understanding of the concept of violence varies according to cultural, political and legal context. To show how differences between legal definitions and procedures in various countries affect institutional practice, and to track the causes of those differences, we would have needed to conduct extensive research into how anti-violence procedures are being practically implemented in those institutions, and combined this with a comprehensive study of continental and Anglo-Saxon law. This kind of research was not possible in the frame of this project.

Therefore, while tracing similarities and differences between regulations created in various cultural, social and political contexts, above all we would like to emphasize that there is no universal regulatory or legal solution to the problem of gender-based violence, nor a single correct way to develop it. Even if it is possible to propose general recommendations for anti-violence practices, they should be created and positioned with consideration for the specificity of local conditions.

Theatre Academy in Warsaw, Poland

At the Theatre Academy in Warsaw (TA), there are two major documents regarding the institution's anti-violence policies – the Code of Ethics (Kodeks etyki)³⁵ and Regulations for the functioning of the Ombudsman (Regulamin funkcjonowania Rzeczniczki Praw Studenckich)³⁶. The first is a general document constituting main principles and values as well as rights, freedoms and responsibilities for all students and workers at the Academy. The second has a more specific character – as the title suggests it regulates the functioning of the Ombudsman.

Those two documents were created in reaction to a grassroots movement of students and alumni who in 2018 accused a teacher of sexual harassment, bullying, and

drinking alcohol during classes. These students and alumni also initiated negotiations with the authorities of the institution. As a result, the TA became the first theatre institution in Poland to create anti-violence regulations, which then inspired the wording of the code of ethics of the Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków. Those initiatives were followed in 2021 by the publication of the *Charter of Rights and Boundaries of the Creative Process*³⁷ – a set of recommendations for anti-violence practices in theatres and theatre schools. It was created as a result of the project “Granice w teatrze”, organised by the Polish Centre of the International Theatre Institute involving anti-violence workshops and debates. The charter has been written by people who developed the regulations at the TA, as well as lawyers and other representatives of various branches of the Polish theatre community.

The #MeToo movement in the Polish performing arts started in theatre schools and was immediately met with a backlash initiated in 2017 by the publication of the article *(Kontr)rewolucja seksualna* by Grzegorz Niziołek, one of the country's most influential theatre researchers³⁸. Niziołek depicted the #MeToo movement's actions as a 'sexual (counter)revolution' which aims to limit freedom of sexual expression. Since that time, influential figures of the theatre community have publicly and privately criticised the supposed conservative character of the movement. Therefore, it was only at the end of 2019 that other theatre institutions joined theatre schools in the process of change. The two most significant cases in those institutions were callouts at the Theatre Bagatela in Kraków and at the Centre for Theatre Arts “Gardzienice”, where the directors were accused of sexual harassment by actresses and other collaborators. During the same period, a group of students at the Dance Department of the Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków called out the abusive behavior of teacher and theatre director Paweł Passini. These cases divided the theatre community in Poland. While the backlash intensified with each well-publicized callout³⁹, several grassroots initiatives were also established, such as an anonymous performative intervention *Anchois Courage*⁴⁰ that addressed the problem of silent acquiescence to gender-based violence in Polish theatre. Such groups have evolved in the context of a strong grassroots feminist movement which has been rising up through recurring protests against the government's failure to recognize women's reproductive rights.⁴¹

Iceland University of the Arts in Reykjavik, Iceland

The anti-violence policy of the Iceland University of the Arts (IUA) comprises four major documents: *Code of Conduct*⁴², *Procedures for addressing gender-related and sexual harassment and violence*⁴³, *Procedures for addressing bullying*⁴⁴ and *Equality Policy and Action Plan*⁴⁵. The first of these, similar to the Polish Code of Ethics, lays out the major values, rights and freedoms of the staff and students. It is supported by the next two documents, which regulate specific procedures for addressing harassment and bullying. The last document details an equal rights policy, with an emphasis on long-term institutional strategies for preventing and fighting gender inequalities.

Those policies were created at the IUA as the result of a vibrant discussion on gender-based violence that had started in Iceland long before the worldwide #MeToo movement intensified in reaction to Alyssa Milano's callout in 2017. Feminist campaigns in Iceland such as SlutWalk, #freethenipple, #outloud and the "Beauty Tips" revolution had already harnessed online activism to mobilize women in solidarity against sexism and sexual abuse. Decades before, women in politics, led by the female political party The Women's Alliance, had forced sexual violence onto the political agenda, leading to pioneering initiatives such as Stígamót, a center for survivors of sexual violence founded in 1989. The #MeToo movement in Iceland was, right from the start, embraced by leaders from various sectors of society, not least by political leaders, women and men, who called for systemic problems, such as lack of societal accountability and political responsibility, to be addressed. This may be one of the reasons why the IUA was the first school of performing arts in Europe to introduce an anti-violence policy. They did so as judicial reforms were being introduced across Iceland, and as many public institutions and independent arts organizations began appointing independent committees to deal with the problem of gender-based violence.

Even though the #MeToo movement in Iceland has involved most sectors of the public sphere – from the academy and the arts to politics and sport, it was criticised for not being inclusive enough for people with disabilities, immigrants, and those who are economically underprivileged. Interestingly, the movement also included men in the discussion around systemic sexual violence and the norms of patriarchal masculinity, which were challenged online under the hashtag 'masculinity'. Moreover, there were "Allies" courses organized by Stígamót as well as a campaign, "Gender-based violence is closer than you think", created by

the Icelandic Committee of UN Women whose goal was to raise awareness among men about the main issues for the movement.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has produced three documents regarding gender-based violence: *Dignity at Work and Study Policy*⁴⁶, *Trans & Gender Diversity Policy and Procedure*⁴⁷, and *Whistle-Blowing Policy and Procedure*⁴⁸. The first outlines rules of expected conduct and applies not only to the staff and students, but also to contractors, consultants and audiences. The second is a policy protecting freedoms connected with sexual and gender identity, including specifically the rights of trans people. *Whistle-Blowing Policy* regulates procedures for reporting violent behaviors with the aim of protecting both the accuser and the accused. Contrary to Icelandic and Polish regulations, there is no major document constituting rights and freedoms at the Academy – they can be interpreted from all three documents, which have equal position and value. As a large institution which also runs courses for children, the RCS has the most extensive documents. To make them easier to communicate to staff and students, the essence of the institution's regulatory framework was extracted and collected into the Safe Space Statement, which has been put on posters and stickers around the campus.

While the *Dignity at Work and Study Policy* existed before the #MeToo campaign, two other documents have been developed as a result of the nationwide discussion about gender-based violence initiated by the #MeToo movement. In the British theatre community it started with an immediate reaction to Milano's statement when Vicky Featherstone, artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre in London, organized the Day of Action collecting anonymous testimonies from people who had experienced sexual harassment. That initiative led to the downfall of two influential men whose abusive behavior was well known in the cultural sector, but until then had never been addressed publicly – Kevin Spacey, the former Old Vic artistic director, and Max Stafford-Clark, the former artistic director of the Royal Court. Following on from Featherstone's initiative, the actors' union Equity issued a statement, *Agenda for Change*⁴⁹, with recommendations for anti-violence practices for various branches of the cultural sector, including theatre schools. The union also tried to pressure the government into revising nationwide policies on sexual harassment using the hashtag 'This is not working'. The Equity union pays special attention to intersections between experiences of gender-based violence and the

financial situation of theatre workers, as well as the systemic nature of economic inequalities.

How is violence understood?

Violence can take many forms. As some of the interviewees pointed out, it is difficult to recognize certain behaviors as violent at the beginning of a process of change due to the lack of a shared understanding of violence. In such cases creating a common language to address this problem is crucial. Legal definitions of violent behaviors can contribute to building that intersubjective understanding, which varies depending on cultural, social, institutional and legal contexts.

There is one key term regarding violent conduct which frequently appears in the described policies – “harassment”. It is defined in all of them as an unwanted behavior. It means that the consent of the recipient is the conclusive factor in recognizing a violent practice. Further expansions of that definition vary. According to Icelandic regulations, to call an unwanted behavior a harassment it has to be offensive to the recipient, while according to the RCS it should also be socially unacceptable. By making this addition, the RCS emphasizes that a harassment is not only a personal offence, but also a breach of dominant social norms. In contrast, the Polish Code of Ethics defines such unwanted behavior as degrading the person’s dignity. Therefore, harassment is perceived as something more than just an infringement of social consensus (and sometimes something different from it). It is a violation of the most basic and universal human right to be valued and respected. In addition, both the Code of Ethics (Poland) and the Code of Conduct (Iceland) take into account that harassment not only offends a sufferer, but can also affect his or her general conditions: the unwanted behavior creates an atmosphere which is threatening, hostile, humiliating or demeaning towards the person. There is also a difference in recognizing violent behavior when it comes to its effects and the intentions of the perpetrator. While according to RCS it is only the effect of the behavior that matters, Polish and Icelandic regulations also take into account the intention. In other words, if a behavior is not generally perceived as offensive but was intended as such it should also be interpreted as harassment.

Harassment can take many forms which can be defined in different ways. While in the Polish *Code of Ethics* there is one vast term ‘harassment’ and more specific terms for sexual and gender-related forms of harassment, the Icelandic policy mentions both gender-related harassment and sexual harassment, and differentiates between sexual harassment

and sexual violence. In the RCS policies, on the other hand, there is just one general term ‘harassment’ that includes all of its forms.

Even though in this analysis we have decided to focus only on one term regarding specific violent behaviors, the policies introduce many other legal terms describing various forms of violence such as bullying, intimidation, discrimination or unequal treatment – and the meaning of those terms also varies. It is important to get to know the differences between them if we want to build a transnational dialogue about the structural problem of patriarchal and gender-based violence. Finally, it is worth noting that definitions of those terms are broad and open to interpretation. Therefore, anti-violence education is important to give us tools to recognize various forms of violence in specific social and cultural contexts.

What are the most important values?

In all three institutions equality is given as one of the most important values protected by anti-discrimination procedures. However, only Icelandic and Scottish regulations state explicitly that diversity as such is highly valued and should be enhanced. Interestingly, at the RCS the emphasis is put specifically on supporting various expressions of gender identity, while the *Code of Conduct* at the IUA mentions diversity in artistic creation, academic work, research and teaching. Another value highlighted in all regulations are the personal rights of each student and worker, including dignity, physical integrity, intimacy, privacy, safety and well-being. Finally, all three institutions share a belief that both personal and artistic free expression should be supported, but only in the Polish *Code of Ethics* is artistic freedom particularly, repeatedly addressed and highlighted more often than other values (something that we will expand on later in this case study).

Uniquely, at the Iceland University of the Arts it is not only human rights that are valued: students and workers are also obliged to maintain ethical behavior towards the environment, especially animals. This reflects a high social awareness of our environmental responsibilities in the context of the ecological crisis and the problem of anthropocentric violence towards non-human beings.

What problems are particularly highlighted?

Theatre Academy in Warsaw

As the *Code of Ethics* states, its goal is to guarantee that free expression, artistic freedom and creativity in teaching are practiced in responsible and ethical ways with respect for the basic rights and freedoms of all staff and students. However, it also specifically mentions at the very beginning of the document what is not the goal – the limitation of anyone's artistic freedom. Such a specification is an uncommon practice and would not appear if it was not for the particular political context.

As previously mentioned, the anti-violence movement in Polish theatre was met with an immediate backlash. One of the main claims of influential researchers and artists opposing the #MeToo campaign has been that it would lead to a 'conservative revolution' and result in a limitation of artistic freedom as well as a violation of the right to 'artistic transgression'. Their understanding of the second term narrowed down mainly to bodily transgressions such as nudity and did not include other subversions of dominant norms (such as gender normativity). Therefore, the intention behind the *Code of Ethics* was to disarm those arguments and highlight that creating anti-violence procedures at the Academy can actually support artistic freedom and free expression, which have been limited by the violent behaviors of abusers.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Even though violence against trans people is prohibited in all analyzed documents as a form of gender-based violence, only the RCS regulations address that problem specifically and broadly. The term 'trans' is considered in the policy as an umbrella term for "a broad range of people whose gender identity is not expressed in ways that are typically associated with their assigned sex at birth". The *Trans & Gender Diversity Policy's* aim is to ensure equal treatment regardless of gender, especially with respect to access to employment, promotion and students' courses for trans people. It declares freedom of gender identity, while mentioning specifically the right to confidentiality regarding gender identity and emphasizing that 'outing' someone without permission is a form of harassment. Moreover, the policy regulates that equality training for students and workers should include transgender issues. It also tackles the problem of representation and visibility by declaring that academic culture should reflect the diversity of students and workers. Finally, the policy establishes detailed procedures that the institution should follow to support a person in the process of transitioning gender.

Such an emphasis on the rights of trans people may reflect the need, expressed by RCS, to perceive demands of the #MeToo movement in the broader context of gender-based violence as it affects people of various gender expressions.

Iceland University of the Arts

According to Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, rector at the IUA, the main lesson that she has learned during the process of change is that institutional anti-violence procedures should be dealt with through the aid of external professionals in order to make sure everyone involved is treated without bias which can easily arise within any workplace. IUA policies reflect that belief and strive for professionalisation in the process of working with survivors of abuse. Procedures for addressing gender-related violence involve establishing a sexual harassment response team which considers complaints of violent behavior. Members of the team are chosen by the executive board of the IUA for a three-year period. All three need to have experience in dealing with cases of this kind. Two are IUA staff members (currently a student counselor and human resource manager) and one member is an external professional with expertise in working with sexual and gender-based violence. These procedures will be revised in 2022, most likely resulting in the team involving only external professionals in order to ensure credibility and professional aid for all involved.

In contrast, at Theatre Academy in Warsaw the Ombudsman has to also work at the institution as a teacher or administrator. Although the role of the Ombudsman is equivalent to that of the response team – a first contact in cases of gender-based violence – their candidacy has to be accepted by the student committee. Therefore, in the IUA it is impartiality, autonomy and professional experience of working with survivors that are highly valued, while in the TA the most important qualities for the Ombudsmen are that they hold the trust of the students and possess an insider's knowledge of the institutional culture.

What are the main anti-violence procedures that have been applied?

Both Iceland University of the Arts and the Theatre Academy in Warsaw created only one regulatory body that receives complaints and is responsible for dealing with them – the Ombudsman in the TA, and the response team at the IUA. In contrast, in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland a complaint can be made to the Human Resources department, the appropriate Director/Assistant Principal, a member of the Consultative Forum, or a Trade Union representative, and it is then passed to the appropriate Director/Assistant Principal to investigate it. Alternatively, the complaint may be raised directly with the Convener of the audit committee of the Board of Governors. The variety of possible ways to file a complaint in the RCS can make it easier for whistleblowers and the people who experienced violence to come forward. However, the relationship between various institutional bodies within the process of disclosure is more complicated than in the TA and IUA, which can make the process more difficult for a complainant to understand, and poses a danger that the complaint will not be passed to the appropriate body.

There are various strategies for responding to misconduct, but the decision as to whether a case should be taken to a formal disciplinary procedure is discretionary and up to the authorised body. At the RCS, it is recommended to first talk to the person who behaves inappropriately where possible. When that strategy turns out to be insufficient it is necessary to file a complaint, which initiates an investigation. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, disciplinary action is taken. At the TA, the Ombudsman has various possible options for approaching a reported case: they can initiate informal or formal mediation, ask the rector

to issue an admonishment, or start a disciplinary procedure. At the IUA the response team decides whether the matter will be taken for a formal procedure on the basis of all the information gathered during the investigation.

It is worth noting that to prevent violence against trans people the RCS has written procedures regarding the process of transitioning gender, which is a unique regulatory initiative among other anti-violence actions adopted by institutions in the European performing arts sector. The regulations make a person available to provide immediate support to the student, and assign responsibilities for overseeing the completion of a “Checklist for supporting students who are transitioning”. The checklist involves name changes, changes of records, and communication with other students, teachers and relevant departments of the RCS.

Summary

The comparison of anti-violence regulations produced by three different educational art institutions in Europe shows how the concept of violence and legal strategies to address it vary depending on the local social, cultural, political conditions and contexts. While building international cooperation to face the structural problem of patriarchal and gender-based violence, we should carefully and consistently take those differences into consideration. While creating transnational tools to address this complex issue, we have to learn how to approach its local situatedness as well as legal and practical consequences. In this regard, an extended research on different anti-violence policies and their implementation in the context of cultural and social local situations, is very much needed.

4) Night mayor of Groningen (The Netherlands)

This case study aims to share a city-wide experiment to addressing the question of sexual harassment at night. Bringing another perspective to the issue, and another sector into focus (music), it illustrates challenges around defining harassment, navigating the idea of freedom and its limits, and providing practical tactics and tools to handle the complex issue of harassment in a very young city centred on a university.

Merlijn Poolman is the elected Night Mayor of Groningen⁵⁰. This university city in the Netherlands has a strong nightlife (with live music and bars that never close) driven

The story of change

In 2018, Merlijn Poolman was elected night mayor. He aimed to make the city's nightlife safe for women and for anyone who might be exposed to sexual harassment and abuse. In 2019, he gathered together a diverse group of young volunteers (all around 25 years old, close in age to the city's students, but with diverse expertise and networks) and founded the Night Council, an initiative focused, among other things, on preventing sexual harassment and discrimination, and on finding solutions to the challenges that arise from it. When they first started to discuss sexual harassment within the Council, the young women had many stories of sexual harassment, while the young men felt the situation wasn't so bad.

In 2019, the Sexual Education Foundation NL launched the 'R U OK?' campaign (similar to the Swedish Dare To Care Campaign⁵¹) with the aim of preventing sexual abuse and encouraging campaigners to ask R U OK? to women, people of colour, or any person who seems to be in a vulnerable position, even before the situation escalates.

Night Council members have a contract with six of the city's largest student groups to conduct training sessions. They start with mixed groups of men and women before dividing them into groups by gender.

The male Night Council members act as allies and give talks to the male students on what appropriate behaviour might be, and what is unacceptable behavior, with practical examples. Key to the success of the programme is that the Council members are very well educated on this topic and able to talk clearly, in a relaxed manner and with a sense of

by a student population of 60,000 including 15,000 being international students. The overall students' population represents 25% of the city's total population.

Poolman started as a musician and a drummer, organising concerts and tours from the age of 16. In 2011, together with friends, he started a nightclub in Groningen that put in place strict policies to prevent sexual harassment. It adopted a proactive approach, and made sure customers knew they could report any incident at the bar. The owners also hired the perfect bouncer – a martial arts expert who was at the same time a warm, welcoming person to whom visitors felt safe talking.

humor. They start by offering stories of their own mistakes to help the others open up – something they might not do if there were also women in the group.

The Night Council also runs talks with women students, discussing how a woman can say no at any point during the night, and creating a space to discuss any situations or incidents that have occurred. Council members adopt a friendly, playful, informal tone in these sessions, and use personal examples to make the young people open up, ask all kinds of questions, and connect with the topic.

Main obstacles

The main obstacles they face in their work is a lack of funding to run more professional campaigns. The Night Council is well positioned between activist groups, public servants (government), and night businesses (bars, clubs, etc.). They would like very much to conduct training sessions for staff in bars and clubs in order to start making a real difference. They think the government should fund the Night Council to prepare and deliver this training, with the employer at the bar or club paying for the time of their personnel. In this way the training is supported but not totally free – and employers are motivated to take it seriously.

Another challenge is the question of adopting a code of practice. Merlijn Poolmann doesn't adopt any code of conduct because he thinks each situation is unique, and “codes

of conduct can be falsely misinterpreted”. He thinks it is hard to create definitions, and while rules about physical limits can be very clear (e.g. ‘avoid touching a person who doesn't want to be touched’), rules around verbal expressions, such as flirting or making a joke or giving a compliment, and what's appropriate and what's not in this area, are much harder to enforce and start to border onto questions of freedom of speech.

Embraced by the municipality, the Council is now working to establish a Night-time City Hall – a safe zone in the city center to provide information to prevent sexual harassment, report any violations, or just get people off the streets when they are drunk, as a way to prevent abuse.

Lessons learned

- Use humor to convey very serious messages because that's what makes people realise how serious they are. Instead of bombarding people with heavy messages and making them feel bad, try to catch their attention with humor, then deliver your serious message. That may be a way not to lose them.
- Give some perspective on what people can do instead of focusing on what they are doing wrong.
- On a political level, success can be achieved when dealing with right wing politicians if the emphasis is put on safety, while the focus should be on inclusion and diversity when dealing with left-wing politicians.

To go further on the subject:

On prevention campaigns in the music sector, we also encourage you to further check the list of resources and examples shared by the Live DMA network⁵².

ENDNOTES

Click numbers to navigate back

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- 26 To be inspired you can check the SHIFT Inclusion Annotated Bibliography which has been designed to support cultural networks and organisations of all kinds in navigating and engaging with the topic of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. It collects a selection of 101 resources, including toolkits, checklists, tests, articles, reports and guides. <https://shift-culture.eu/inclusion-accessibility-cultural-organisation/inclusion-annotated-bibliography/>

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Ilse Ghekiere, Initiator and coordinator of Engagement, an artist-led movement that tackles sexual harassment, sexism and abuse of power in the Belgium arts field

<https://www.engagementarts.be/en/>

Bert Lessafer, Ombudsman for all programmes except audiovisual arts, KASK – Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent

<https://schoolofartsgent.be/2021/?lang=en>

Klaartje Oerlemans, Business management and administration, GRIP house (choreographic platform), Antwerp

<https://www.grip.house/>

Viktor Van der Veken, Investigator at Genderkamer, Flemish Ombuds Service

<https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-ombudsdienst>

Croatia:

Jasna Žmak, Dramaturg / Student Support Coordinator, Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb

<http://www.unizg.hr/homepage/study-at-the-university-of-zagreb/degrees-studies-and-courses/studies-and-courses-in-croatian/arts/>

Czech Republic:

Alma Lily Rayner, multidisciplinary artist and feminist artist. Writer of a proposal for action related to sexual harassment for the Academy of Visual Arts, Prague

<https://www.almalilyrayner.com/>

France:

Anne Bourrasé, Co-President, Association Contemporaines

<https://contemporaines.fr/>

Virginie Jortay, Director of the Superior School (Esac) and of the professional insertion (Cip) at the CNAC-Centre national des arts du cirque, Châlons-en-Champagne, France. Former Director of Esac-Ecole supérieure des arts du cirque in Brussels, Belgium.

<https://www.cnac.fr/>

Germany:

Moritz Eggert, Composer / Professor at Musikhochschule München

<https://website.musikhochschule-muenchen.de/en>

Greece:

Amalia Kontoyanni, Head of the Artistic Planning & Literary Department, NTNG / Lecturer at the Drama School of the National Theatre of Northern Greece, Thessaloniki

<https://www.ntng.gr/>

Danae Theodoridou, Performance artist and researcher. She has been part of the Support Art Workers network of art workers.

<http://www.danaetheodoridou.com/bio> <https://www.supportartworkers.org/en/>

Iceland:

Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector, Iceland University of the Arts

<https://www.lhi.is/>

Lithuania:

Kristina Steiblyte, Theatrolgist / Playwright and head of Performing Arts Critics Association, part of the Sirenos festival team

<https://smka.lt/about-us/> <https://www.sirenos.lt/en/>

Norway:

Jørn Mortensen, Dean, School of Arts, Design and Media, Kristiania University College,
Vice-President of ELIA-European League of Institutes of Arts

<http://kristiania.no>

Poland:

Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, Lecturer and ombudsperson for students, The Aleksander
Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw

<https://akademia.at.edu.pl/en>

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Iga Gańczarczyk, Dramaturg / Dean, AST National Academy of Theatre Arts, Kraków

<http://www.ast.krakow.pl/en>

Slovenia:

Tomaž Gubenšek, Dean of the Academy for Theatre and Film (AGRFT)

<https://www.agrft.uni-lj.si/en>

Roman Kuhar, Dean at Faculty of Art, University of Ljubljana

<https://www.ff.uni-lj.si/en>

The Netherlands:

Merlijn Poolman, former EMC-European Music Council fellow / Night mayor
of Groningen

<https://nachtraad.nl/en/about-us/>

United Kingdom:

Lea O'Loughlin, Co-Director at Acme Artists Studios, London / President of RES ARTIS,
the worldwide network of residency organisations

<https://acme.org.uk/>

<http://resartis.org>

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