

Alliance for
Socially
Engaged
Arts

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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THE PRACTICE OF HOPE



Luís Jerónimo
Director of Sustainability and Equity
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

A Letter from the Chair

It is a privilege to introduce the First Annual Report of the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts. Looking back on this inaugural year, we feel both excited and grateful for what has already begun to take shape.

The Alliance was launched at a moment when Europe – and the world – is facing profound challenges: climate change, growing inequality, democratic fragility, conflict, and social fragmentation. In times like these, the arts demonstrate their immense civic potential. They create spaces for connection, dialogue, healing, and collective imagination. They help communities navigate complexity and open pathways toward change. They remind us of our shared humanity. These principles are the essence of Socially Engaged Arts and the North Star that guided the launch of the Alliance.

The Alliance unites private European foundations with a shared belief: that philanthropic collaboration can be a key driver for change. By joining forces across borders, we align goals, raise visibility, and help socially engaged arts thrive.

From the outset, the Alliance has been co-designed with the sector, based on the identified needs of practitioners and organisations: stronger networks, sustainable and flexible funding, capacity-building, and more opportunities for learning and collaboration.

A defining milestone of this first year was the launch of our Fellowship Programme. The response to the open call was extraordinary, reflecting a vibrant and diverse field of practice.

From this remarkable pool of socially engaged arts organisations across Europe, 15 visionary leaders were selected to form the inaugural cohort of Fellows.

Their work demonstrates the sector's vital importance. The Fellowship has already highlighted the value of trust-based support, the power of nurturing relationships, and the strength that emerges when Fellows realise they are not alone but part of a wider community.

We express our profound gratitude to the Fellows, whose leadership, care, and courage are shaping the future of socially engaged arts; to our foundation partners, whose commitment and shared vision make the Alliance possible; and to our implementing partners for their expertise and collaboration. We also thank the Network of European Foundations for its support in hosting the Alliance and Daniela Nofal, our Programme Manager, whose dedication has been crucial to this initiative. Finally, we thank the many socially engaged arts organisations and practitioners across Europe who continue to inspire and drive this Alliance forward.

In these troubled times, I return often to Gerhard Richter's words: "Art is the highest form of hope." The first year of the Alliance has shown that hope is not a principle but a practice – one exercised daily by socially engaged arts organisations, artists, and communities across Europe. The Alliance is committed to supporting, celebrating, and scaling this hope in the years to come.

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTS



VALUES



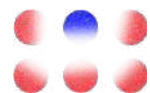
Collective Drive

At the heart of our alliance is a strong commitment to collaboration and a shared purpose to shape a transformative future for socially engaged arts across Europe. We share an ambitious vision and believe our impact together is greater than what we can achieve individually. By supporting innovation and working across silos, we build a resilient, vibrant ecosystem where socially engaged arts can thrive.



Inclusivity

We value inclusivity, recognising the diverse contexts and societal needs across Europe. We believe in the power of diverse voices coming together to amplify impact. We are committed to creating an environment that is open to new ideas, with abundant opportunities to participate and engage, fostering fulfilling, creative lives. By embracing inclusivity, we foster collaboration, co-create better solutions, and empower all to shape a more connected and impactful future.



Impact

Every action we take is focused on making a tangible difference and leaving behind a meaningful legacy together. We are driven by our North Star: scaling the visibility and influence of socially engaged arts practices and practitioners. We believe in the role that the arts can play in strengthening community ties, changing narratives, and shaping better futures. We are ambitious change-makers committed to increasing the recognition of socially engaged arts.

The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts (the “Alliance”) brings together leading European philanthropic foundations to champion the power of socially engaged arts to drive positive social change across the continent. By connecting and elevating organisations and practitioners, and providing them with essential skills and resources, the Alliance works towards a Europe where community engagement and creative collaboration sit at the heart of the arts sector, fostering social progress for all. The Alliance is hosted by the Network of European Foundations.

VISION

Socially engaged arts are celebrated for their creative power and ability to drive change, with widespread recognition and support across Europe.

MISSION

The Alliance aims to connect and elevate visionary leaders and organisations in socially engaged arts across Europe, transforming public and policy awareness and securing vital recognition and funding to accelerate their impact.

WHO WE ARE

Steering Committee

Chaired by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the current members are Allianz Foundation, Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fundación Banco Santander, het Cultuurfonds, Hilti Foundation, King Baudouin Foundation, “la Caixa” Foundation, Moleskine Foundation and Stiftung Mercator Schweiz.

Executive Committee

Members of the Executive Committee include the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo and the Network of European Foundations.

Team

Hosted by the Network of European Foundations (NEF), the Alliance is coordinated by Programme Manager Daniela Nofal, who supports the Steering Committee in its strategic decisions and manages programme implementation.

Network of
European
Foundations

Foundation Partners

ALLIANZ
FOUNDATION

CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

Daniel & Nina
Carasso
FOUNDATION

European
Cultural
Foundation

Fondazione
CARIPLO

Fondazione
Compagnia
di San Paolo

Santander
Fundación

het
Cultuurfonds

HILTI
FOUNDATION

“la Caixa” Foundation

King Baudouin
Foundation
Together for a better society

Moleskine
Foundation

Stiftung
Mercator
Schweiz



WHAT WE DO

The Fellowship Programme

The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship Programme aims to connect and support visionary leaders of arts organisations driven by community engagement and social change across Europe. It supports both leaders and their organisations on a transformational journey through shared learning and funding that enables collaboration and the scaling of impact. The Fellowship focuses on fostering a connected movement of practitioners that is ready and capable of engaging in advocacy and influencing policy to shape the future of socially engaged arts.

Advocacy

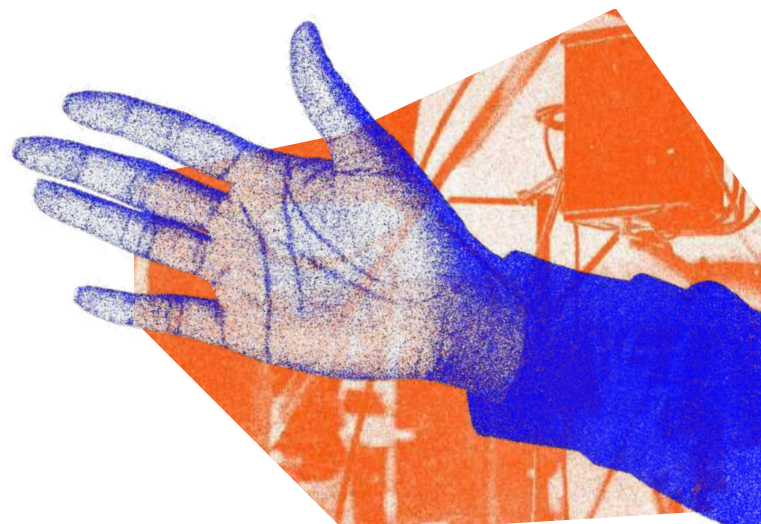
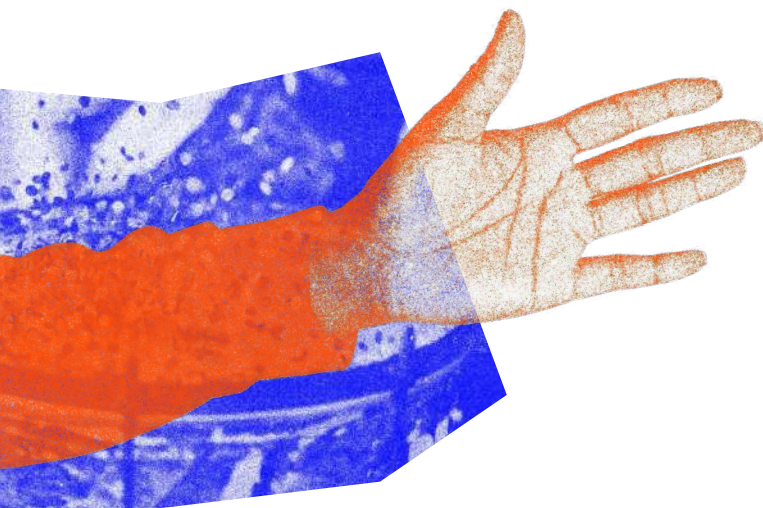
The Alliance seeks to shift how socially engaged arts organisations are recognised within the European ecosystem, with a focus on influencing policy and investment. Its combined advocacy efforts aim to ensure that socially engaged arts are at the heart of the European ecosystem, recognised as a driver of innovation and social transformation, with social impact and artistic quality acknowledged as mutually reinforcing outcomes.

Our Long-term Goals

The Alliance's ten-year vision is an ecosystem in which social engagement is central to the arts and cultural sector's mission, and where the life-changing work that socially engaged arts organisations do within their communities is recognised and supported by policy, philanthropy, the arts sector, and public funders.

The Alliance's core four long-term goals are:

- **Increasingly mainstream narrative** that challenges the dichotomy of artistic versus social value.
- **Leaders/organisations and foundations influence policy** with a new narrative that upholds the value of socially engaged arts at a European level.
- **Policy, philanthropy, the arts sector, and public funders** recognise and prioritise investment in socially engaged arts organisations.
- **Socially engaged arts organisations and their leaders** are connected across Europe and deliver greater impact in their communities.



A YEAR BUILT TOGETHER



Daniela Nofal
Programme Manager
Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts

The year 2025 was a foundational one for the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts, one marked by many firsts, but above all by the relationships and shared values that began to take root around our work. From the outset, we knew the Alliance would be meaningful only if it grew alongside the people and practices it exists to support. That belief has been our compass, guiding and informing our work in the Alliance's inaugural year.

As the year unfolded, one lesson became especially clear: meaningful collaboration takes time, patience, and a willingness to sit with complexity. From the early consultations that shaped our strategy to the many shared decisions that followed, we saw how powerful it can be when practitioners, organisations, and foundations come together to drive meaningful change. Working collaboratively has reminded us that process matters deeply and is the foundation on which trust and shared ownership can flourish.

This past year also gave us the privilege of learning directly from practitioners deeply embedded in their communities across Europe. Accompanying the Fellows from our inaugural programme has been both grounding and humbling. Their imagination, inventiveness, and perseverance, often sustained under precarious conditions, are a continuous reminder of the civic importance of this work. At a time of democratic erosion, social fragmentation, war, and rising inequality, socially engaged arts create pathways toward repair, belonging, and collective imagination. They invite communities to rehearse and build alternative futures, to strengthen the relationships that make collective life possible, and to affirm their right to shape the societies in which they live.

The most notable aspect of this year was the deepening of relationships among Fellows.

As they came to understand one another's contexts, they also began to recognise echoes of their own experiences in each other's stories. That mutual recognition, and the realisation that the struggles and hopes held by them, their organisations and their communities are connected and not carried in isolation, has begun to foster a transnational sense of solidarity and the early shape of a community of practice. These exchanges are a reminder that meaningful change often begins in small, human moments of being seen, heard, and understood. The bonds formed this year, while still young, hold the seeds of an emerging network of practitioners whose collective impact and influence will only deepen with time.

Engaging in our first year of programmatic work has clarified where support is most needed, and the Alliance can meaningfully contribute to broader advocacy efforts to strengthen recognition of socially engaged arts. This growing clarity developed alongside and was strengthened by collaboration among our foundation partners. Their readiness to navigate complexity and respond to a rapidly shifting landscape together has provided strength and clear direction as our programme developed. At a time when democratic values and civic spaces across Europe are under increasing threat, this kind of collective stewardship is not only impactful but essential to navigating the uncertainties we face today.

Many people have made this journey possible: the Fellows, foundation partners, implementing partners, and the wider community of practitioners who push boundaries and spearhead change with courage and creativity. As we look forward, the foundations laid in 2025 feel grounded, meaningful, and full of possibility. Building on this momentum, we step into the next chapter, prepared to build on the work we have begun together.

2025 AT A GLANCE

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS*

Fellowship Applications

These numbers reflect the milestones we have achieved this year, highlighting the reach of our work.

1

open call for Fellowship applications

836

applications received from 39 Countries

20

selection committee members participated in a three-stage selection process

54%

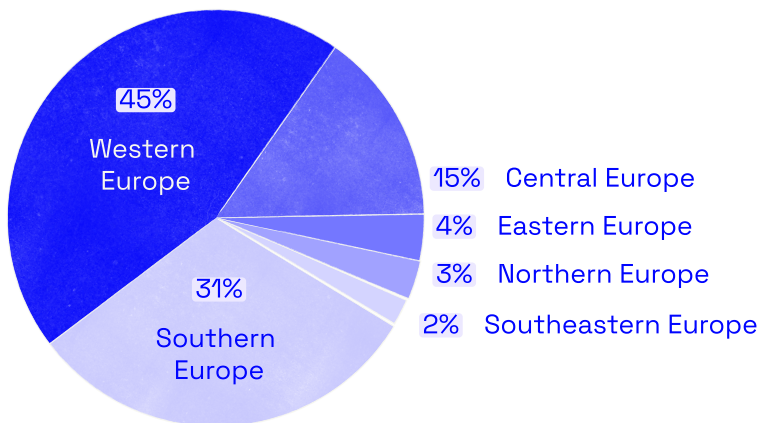
of organisations dedicate 90 - 100% of their activity to socially engaged arts

1 IN 3

organisations have more than 12 years experience in socially engaged arts

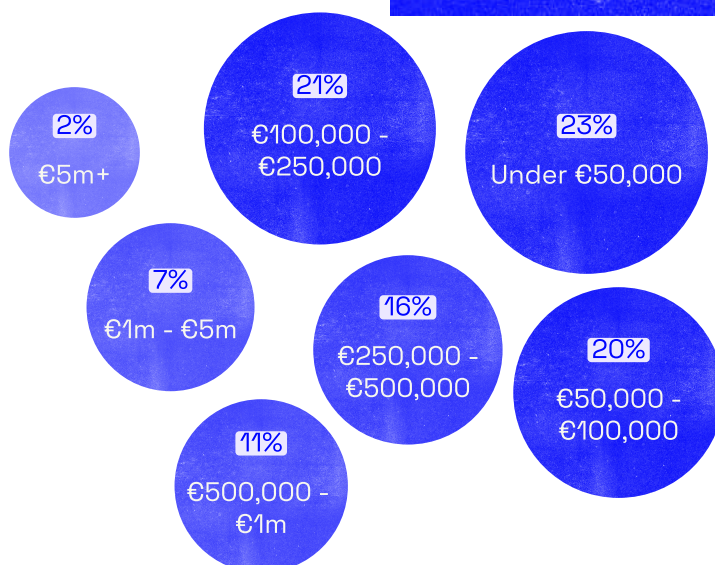
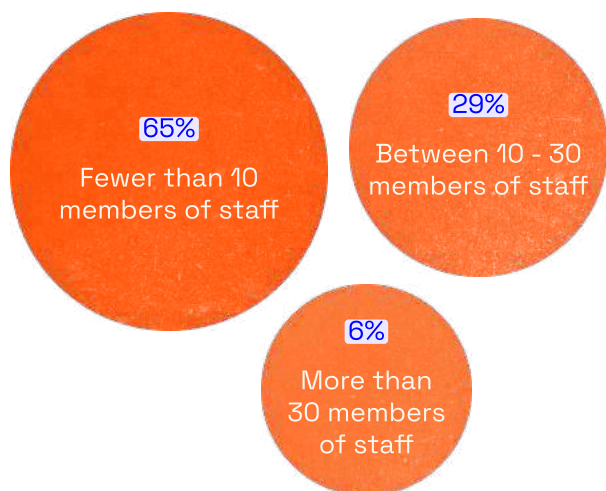
Applications by Region

Commitments to Socially Engaged Arts



Size of Organisation

Annual Budget of Organisation



* Activities in 2025 were shaped by a consultative exercise conducted the year before, involving a 12-member Consultative Group and a survey distributed to over 170 grantees of participating foundations.

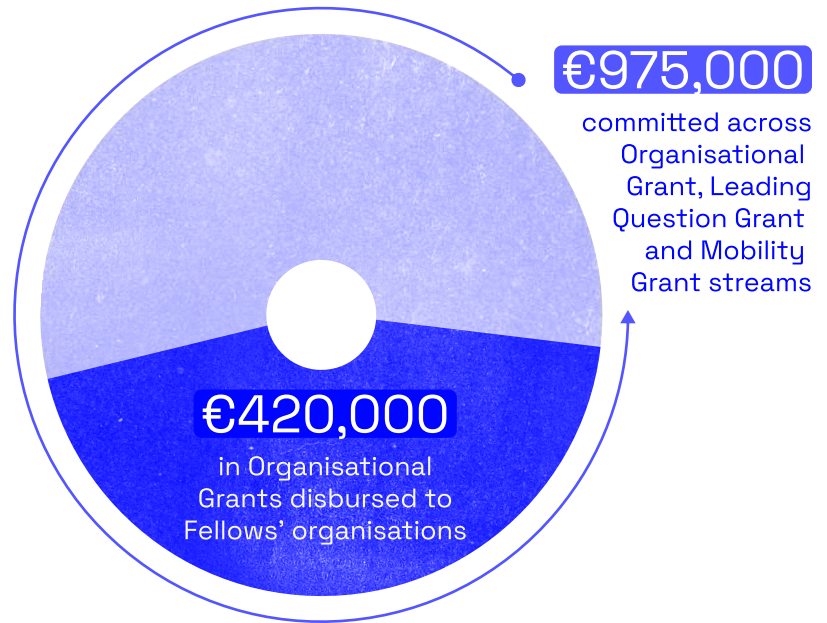
The Fellowship Programme

15

Fellows selected from 14 countries

1

Fellowship residential in Turin, Italy



Partners and Collaborators

8

partner organisations co-delivering programme activities

- **Fellowship partners**
The Audience Agency, Culture Action Europe and Fondazione Fitzcarraldo
- **Advocacy partner**
Culture Action Europe
- **Learning partner**
New Silk Roads
- **Research partners**
The Field Società Cooperativa, Fondazione Santagata per l'Economia della Cultura, KEA European Affairs
- **Communications partner**
Shape History

13

philanthropic partner foundations

- Launched with 11 and two new foundation partners joined in December
- 5 Steering Committee meetings

1 website launched

2 social media accounts launched



Grew our reach by 5,600+ followers on Instagram, 4,000+ followers on LinkedIn, and 700+ newsletter subscribers

Outreach and Events

200+

features in the press with an estimated 1.49m views

4

high-profile speaking invitations to showcase the Alliance's work across philanthropy and cultural events.

2

in-person events hosted with 170+ participants

2

webinars hosted with 385+ participants

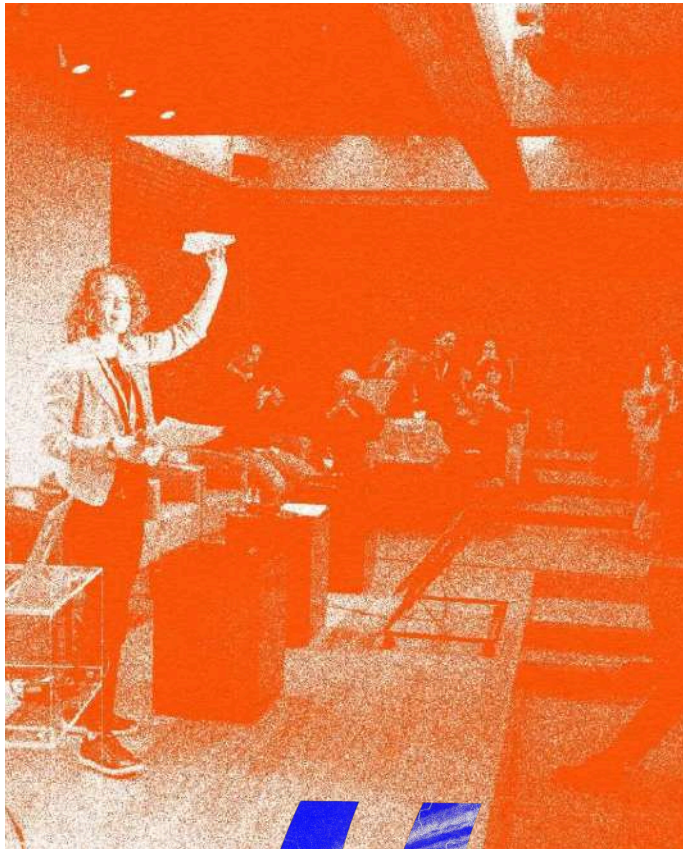
1

media op-ed published in Alliance Magazine

1

recognition by the Museum for the United Nations - UN Live for the Top 10 Culture for Impact 2025.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES



January

Launch of the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts and call for applications for Fellowship programme at the 'Arts and Culture for a Socially Impactful Europe' event at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal.

This event brought together 130 + leaders from the arts, philanthropy and policy sectors to shape a vision for a stronger, more connected and socially impactful European arts ecosystem. Through panel discussions and presentations, participants explored practical ways to raise the profile of socially engaged arts and strengthen this field of practice across Europe.



Anis Barnat,
Managing Director – Co-lead
Community Arts Network

Through my involvement with the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts, I've experienced a productive and thoughtful atmosphere that balances the field's practical needs – connections, funding, and advocacy – with rigorous, transparent processes for selecting Fellows. Perhaps most importantly, it has been a space of meaningful encounters, where I've met inspiring artists, funders, networks, and policy makers, all of them incredible people, highlighting the richness and interconnectedness of socially engaged practice.

February

- Fellowship submission window closed: 836 eligible applications received

May

- Op-ed published in Alliance Magazine

October

- First Fellowship residential held in Turin, Italy
- Foundation partners hosted in Turin by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo for an in-person Steering Committee meeting and met Fellows in-person for the first time
- New Silk Roads appointed as learning partner

June

- Fellowship programme activities begin with 15 Fellows
- Funders' breakfast hosted in Lisbon, Portugal



November

- The Field Consulting, Fondazione Santagata and KEA European Affairs were commissioned to conduct major research to map socially engaged arts across Europe

December

- Europe-wide research survey launched
- Fundación Banco Santander and het Cultuurfonds joined the Alliance
- Partnership with Culture Action Europe announced
- Alliance selected for UN Live's 2025 List for Culture for Social Impact



FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME



This year marked the launch of the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship, bringing together 15 leaders from across Europe whose work reflects the diversity of socially engaged arts. Since June 2025, Fellows have participated in an intensive learning journey that has provided a collaborative space to reflect on their leadership, deepen their understanding of their organisation's impact, and strengthen their advocacy efforts.

Through a combination of online capacity-building workshops, peer-to-peer exchange, action learning sets, learning-by-doing and mentorship, the Fellows have begun to develop new skills, refine organisational strategies, and gain greater insight into the opportunities and challenges shaping their work. Fellows also had the opportunity to gather in Turin, Italy, for the first in-person Fellowship residential. The residential provided an essential space for deepening connections that had begun online, accelerating the formation of bonds that are already offering support, critical friendship, and new possibilities for collaboration.

The Fellowship's financial investment is also beginning to contribute to tangible impact within organisations. Each Fellow receives €30,000 in core organisational support and €30,000 to develop pilot actions addressing key opportunities or challenges within their contexts. Even at this early stage, we are seeing how these grants are helping Fellows strengthen their teams, stabilise their structures, and lay the groundwork for deeper community impact. An additional €5,000 mobility grant enables Fellows to travel, connect with peers, and build new alliances across Europe, opening pathways for collaboration and advocacy that extend beyond their local contexts.

The expertise of our implementing partners has shaped the programme's momentum – The Audience Agency, Fitzcarraldo Foundation, and Culture Action Europe – who have co-designed and delivered a tailor-made curriculum anchored in four core pillars: Advocacy, Impact and Evaluation, Narrative and Storytelling, and Holistic Leadership. These pillars are helping Fellows think more strategically about how they position their organisations, articulate their impact, and engage with broader cultural and policy conversations.

As the Fellowship moves into its second year and Fellows begin developing their pilot actions, we are witnessing the emergence of a constellation of new lines of critical inquiry that together illuminate the landscape of socially engaged arts today. The foundations laid in 2025 are equipping Fellows to step more confidently into their roles, not only as leaders, but as part of a connected movement capable of engaging in advocacy and influencing the policies that will shape the future of socially engaged arts across Europe.



THE FELLOWS

The Fellowship programme welcomed 15 leaders of socially engaged arts organisations from 14 countries across Europe, each harnessing the power of the arts to drive meaningful social change. Together, they represent a rich diversity of artistic disciplines, geographies, and community contexts. Their organisations address urgent challenges, ranging from the climate crisis and homelessness to peacebuilding and urban regeneration, through deeply rooted, participatory, and co-creative arts practices.



Alona Karavai

Asortymentna kinnata, Ukraine

Alona leads Asortymentna kinnata's participatory strategic and organisational development.

Asortymentna kinnata is a contemporary art project space in western Ukraine, working where nontraditional art and identities are often stigmatised. It supports feminist, LGBTQ+, and marginalised communities through exhibitions, residencies, education, and public campaigns that promote tolerance and diversity.



An Vandermeulen

Globe Aroma, Belgium

An leads Globe Aroma's artistic vision and strategy, working to decentralise authorship and share decision-making in the organisation with its community of artists.

Globe Aroma is a cultural hub for artists and art audiences in forced displacement, supporting people in exile who face barriers to arts participation due to precarious citizenship. Working across the cultural, educational, and migration sectors, it creates spaces where communities can make, explore, and share art with wider audiences.



Andrej Nosov

Heartefact, Serbia

Andrej manages Heartefact and leads the development of its programmes and initiatives.

Heartefact supports contemporary cultural and artistic creativity in the Western Balkans, fostering ways to rethink socio-political issues and creating the conditions for a new generation of progressives. Through creative, expert, and artistic exchange, it advocates new models of production, regional cooperation, and alternative education models.



Ceren Yartan

Center for Spatial Justice (Mekanda Adalet Derneği), Türkiye

Ceren leads strategy and programmes at the Center for Spatial Justice, grounding its work in equity and strong community relationships.

Based in Istanbul, the organisation advances fairer, more ecological, and democratic cities and rural areas through research, exhibitions, films, and education that amplify marginalised voices and support inclusive public space.



Damien McGlynn

Create, Ireland

Damien is responsible for the management, strategic direction, partnerships, and funding of Create, ensuring relevance for artists and communities in an ever-changing social and political landscape.

Create's mission is to enable artists and communities to co-create exceptional art together, challenging isolation and societal fragmentation. As Ireland's national development agency for collaborative arts, it offers support and resources for artists working in social and community contexts through professional development, mentoring, training, commissioning, and project opportunities.xplore, and share art with wider audiences.



Esteban Marín Pérez

Contorno Urbano Foundation, Spain

Esteban leads Contorno Urbano Foundation's strategic planning and project management, guiding its long-term vision and development.

Contorno Urbano Foundation's mission is to build more environmentally, socially, and culturally sustainable societies and cities across Spain. The foundation places the eco-social crisis at the centre of all its projects and believes that artistic experimentation is the key to creating new opportunities and strengthening communities.



Jasmina Ibrahimovic

Rotterdams Wijktheater, The Netherlands

Jasmina leads the artistic direction of Rotterdam's Wijktheater and the International Community Arts Festival (ICAF), building long-term partnerships and connecting socially engaged arts locally and internationally.

Wijktheater creates community arts projects with and by people whose stories are often unheard, reshaping social narratives and advocating for a more inclusive society. It also initiated ICAF, the world's largest festival for socially engaged community-based art.



Lewis Coenen-Rowe

Culture for Climate Scotland, United Kingdom

At Culture for Climate Scotland, Lewis is responsible for driving programmes with non-arts organisations tackling systemic climate justice through creative methods.

Culture for Climate Scotland encourages individuals, organisations, and strategic bodies to harness culture in achieving an environmentally sustainable Scotland. Its programmes help sustainability professionals integrate creative practices into their work and support the culture sector in addressing its environmental impact and influencing others to do the same.



Margaux Schwab

foodculture days, Switzerland

At foodculture days, Margaux leads the strategic and curatorial vision, fostering collaboration across disciplines.

foodculture days shares a knowledge of and love for food, organising exhibitions, radio programmes, workshops, and collective creative cooking sessions. The organisation creates a space to advocate for ecological awareness, social justice, and the craft of food preparation, as well as for sustainable models that nurture, heal, and sustain the living world.



Marta Silva

Largo Residências, Portugal

Marta oversees Largo Residências' cultural and social strategy and management, supports new leadership, and guides strategic planning to grow its impact.

Largo Residências is a community cultural centre based in Jardins do Bombarda, bringing together artists and arts initiatives to address urban planning and sustainable city building. It strengthens community ties, engages local and international audiences, and promotes integration by employing socially vulnerable groups from the local area.



Martin Yankov

The Collective Foundation, Bulgaria

Martin leads the Collective Foundation, developing sustainable strategies to support artists and local communities and to prevent displacement during urban renewal.

The Collective Foundation leverages art and culture as catalysts for urban transformation in Bulgaria and across Europe. Through community engagement, stakeholder activation, and cultural programming, it reclaims neglected spaces while protecting surrounding communities. The foundation is working toward a sustainable model that empowers artists and locals throughout the regeneration process.



Samra Said

**Arts & Homelessness International,
United Kingdom**

Samra leads Arts & Homelessness International's programmes supporting creative leadership, as well as participatory theatre democracy initiatives with local councils.

Arts & Homelessness International is the global network for arts and homelessness, working to integrate people who are or have been homeless into the sector as creatives, practitioners, and leaders. It works both on the ground with the artists themselves and with local governments, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Charity Commission to involve homeless people in creating systemic change through the arts and creativity.



Stefano Beghi

KARAKORUM srl Impresa Sociale, Italy

Stefano leads KARAKORUM's partnerships, advocacy, and the development of new projects that connect artistic practice with local communities and social change.

KARAKORUM combines theatre with the enhancement of city spaces, social work, and tourism to shape a more sustainable, forward-thinking world. Through participatory, context-specific processes, it translates global challenges into concrete local actions, fostering inclusion, civic imagination, and stronger bonds between people and their environment.



Sophie Archereau

L'âge de la tortue, France

Sophie oversees the financial, administrative, and technical delivery of L'âge de la tortue's projects, and co-leads the organisation's overall strategy and direction.

L'âge de la tortue champions art as a lever for transformation, on issues including urban change, migration, and the relationship between private and public space in France. Rooted in the district of Blosne in Rennes, France, but active across Europe, it seeks to rethink dominant narratives and actively involve communities in shaping more inclusive public spaces.



Zvonimir Dobrovic

Domino, Croatia

At Domino, Zvonimir leads strategy, programming, and fundraising, with keen sensitivity to emerging needs and often-overlooked voices in the community.

Domino is a platform for contemporary performance and progressive cultural practices that supports feminist, queer, and socially engaged perspectives across Croatia and beyond. Through the production of innovative artistic, activist, and advocacy work, Domino creates space for dialogue, critical thinking, and creative freedom, while fostering sustainable collaboration between artists, communities, and institutions.

FELLOWS ACROSS EUROPE

Damien McGlynn

Create, Ireland

Samra Said

Arts & Homelessness
International,
United Kingdom

**Lewis
Coenen-Rowe**

Culture for Climate
Scotland, United
Kingdom

Jasmina Ibrahimovic

Rotterdams Wijktheater The Netherlands

An Vandermeulen

Globe Aroma, Belgium

Alona Karavai

Asortymentna kimnata, Ukraine

Margaux Schwab

foodculture days, Switzerland

Zvonimir Dobrovic

Domino, Croatia

Andrej Nosov

Heartefact, Serbia

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Martin Yankov

The Collective Foundation, Bulgaria

Sophie Archereau

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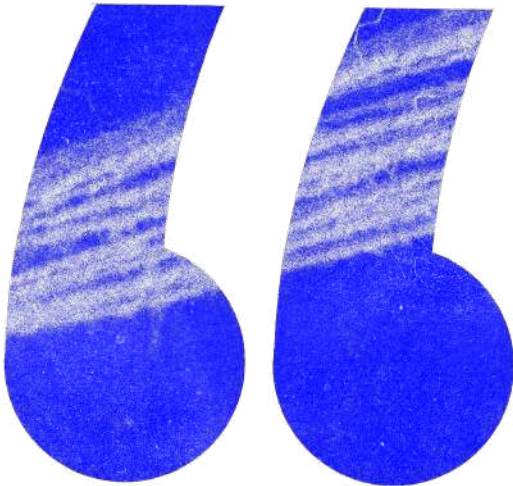
Center for Spatial Justice
(Mekanda Adalet Derneği), Türkiye

Marta Silva

Largo Residências, Portugal

Stefano Beghi

KARAKORUM srl Impresa Sociale, Italy



Alona Karavai
Head of the Board
 Asortymentna kimnata



Since June 2025, I was able to strengthen and restructure my team in a way that allowed me to concentrate on strategic transformation and new pilots dealing with community work in times of war and forced migration. It has really created a space where I could take a look inside of myself, instead of only caring for others.

I was welcomed in a supporting cohort of like-minded leaders working with similar challenges, but in different geographies, and could get new insights around impact measurement and advocacy work. Last but not least, my personal and professional geography, which was restricted almost exclusively to Ukraine in the last three years, re-opened again to a bigger European perspective. This feels a lot for only a half a year, but I feel like the Fellowship is only taking up its pace. More to come!



Margaux Schwab
Founder and Director
 foodculture days

The Fellowship comes at a crucial moment in my trajectory, marking over ten years of commitment to transdisciplinary practice around food politics and ecologies. At the centre of my work lies a sincere desire for social and environmental transformations towards more just and sustainable societal models, which could nurture, heal, and sustain the living world in all its diverse forms. Therefore, the need to connect with a Europe-wide community of practice who share the same values and vision is crucial to sustain this desire.

The Fellowship allows me to share this accumulated knowledge with the other Fellows with whom I already share a common language. At the same time, I am able to deepen my understanding of the other Fellows' fields of expertise, challenges and potential synergies in their field and create connections with mine (a sort of real-life MasterClass!).

Samra Said
Co-Director
 Arts & Homelessness International



Being part of the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship has been a beautiful experience for me and Arts & Homelessness International (AHI). The programme has given me dedicated time to think, reflect, learn, and connect with a cohort that truly understands the challenges facing our sector, within a facilitated workshops and action learning setting. Seeing how co-Fellows and the Alliance's team work and operate has directly strengthened the quality of the programmes I produce. I especially valued the residential retreat, which helped me understand the different contexts organisations are operating in and built confidence in AHI's approach, methodologies, and commitment to co-creation. I've loved the practical tools and critical conversations shaping how we grow and advocate. At a time of scarce funding, the core support to strengthen our capacity and care for our people has been invaluable.



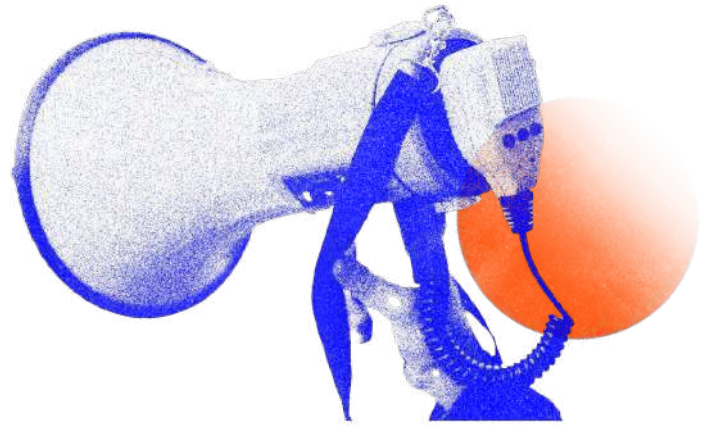
ADVOCACY

The Alliance's combined advocacy efforts aim to ensure that socially engaged arts are at the heart of the European ecosystem. The activities we have developed are designed to meet two key advocacy objectives: building the visibility and cohesion of socially engaged arts across Europe and unlocking structural transformation by influencing investment in the field.

A Timely Advocacy Opportunity at the EU-level

The publication of the Culture Compass, coupled with the European Union's ongoing preparations for the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), presents a timely and strategic opportunity for the Alliance to engage and influence European policymakers. The European Commission recently proposed an €8.6 billion budget for the new AgoraEU programme (2028–2034) that merges Creative Europe with the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme – more than doubling the previous cultural funding. While this marks a promising starting point, the proposal remains under negotiation and is set to run for the next two years, with scope for adjustments over time.

As a leading EU-level cultural advocacy organisation, Culture Action Europe brings networks and expertise well aligned with the Alliance's goals to strengthen the role of socially engaged arts within European cultural policy. Together, we aim to ensure that socially engaged artistic practices are meaningfully represented in key EU-level discussions on the future of arts policy and funding, positioning the field as a vital driver of cultural democracy, social cohesion, and community empowerment. As debates continue, there is a strategic opening to demonstrate how socially engaged arts can help mainstream culture not only within AgoraEU but across other strands, where culture's contribution can play a vital role in driving change.



Much of our work this year has focused on creating pathways for practitioners' voices to enter policy conversations that shape their realities. We are collaborating on a dedicated strand of the ASK PAY TRUST campaign and contributing to wider sector consultations and policy-related events set to take place next year. Through these joint activities, we aim to elevate the field's visibility and advance its formal recognition within EU cultural priorities.

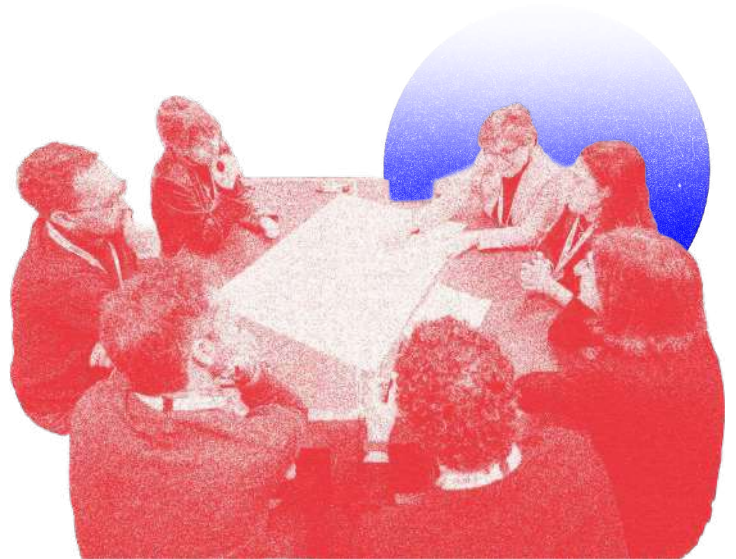
Research and Evidence-building

In line with our commitment to scale recognition and support for socially engaged arts, the Alliance has partnered with The Field Società Cooperativa, Fondazione Santagata per l'Economia della Cultura, and KEA European Affairs to undertake a comprehensive study of the socially engaged arts ecosystem across the Council of Europe area. This research explores the diversity of practices driving social change, cohesion, and citizen-led action, and will generate insights that aim to:

- deepen understanding of the challenges and needs facing the sector
- increase the visibility of socially engaged arts within and beyond the cultural field
- and inform future support and policy so that the sector can thrive.

To ensure the study reflects the true breadth and diversity of socially engaged arts organisations, we launched a Europe-wide survey in 2025. Through this, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of how socially engaged arts are understood across different contexts, and what organisations identify as their key impacts, challenges, needs, and emerging trends. The insights gathered will not only inform the Alliance's strategy but also build a much-needed evidence base for the sector, supporting advocacy efforts, strengthening a shared understanding of the field, and enabling more targeted assistance for socially engaged arts across Europe. The findings will be published in a full report in 2026.

REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS FROM OUR WORK



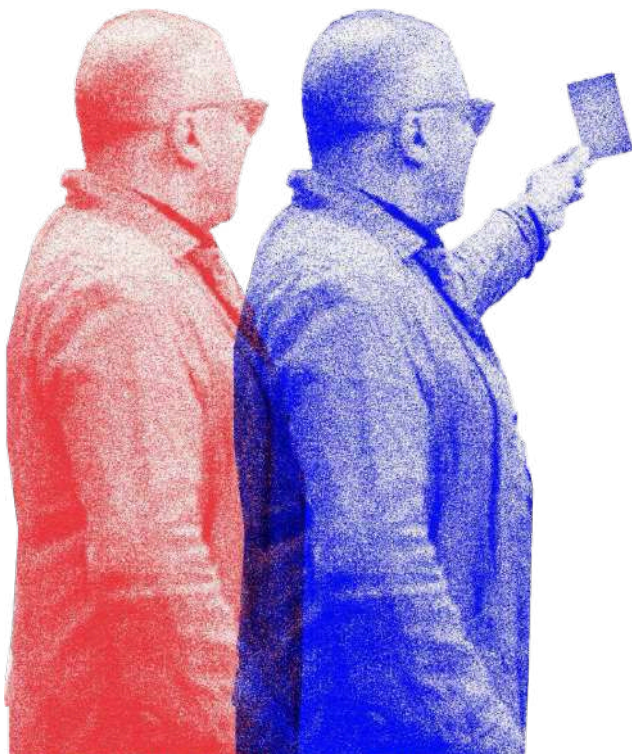
As we look back on the year, we take stock not only of what we achieved but of the challenges we navigated and the lessons that shaped our journey. Throughout 2025, we encountered moments that affirmed our approach, stretched our thinking, and revealed where we must adapt. Each has contributed to a deeper understanding of what it takes to support socially engaged arts at a transnational scale. This section captures the insights that have emerged along the way.

Learning from a Vibrant and Diverse Field of Practice

The response to our open call for Fellows offered us invaluable insights into socially engaged arts organisations operating across Europe. It revealed an extraordinary breadth of geographies, organisational models, and artistic practices that shape socially engaged arts today. Through the selection process, we gained a clearer view of a field that is not only vibrant and diverse but also rapidly evolving in response to shifting social, political, and economic conditions across Europe.

What we observed firsthand is that socially engaged arts thrive across every art form – sometimes focusing on a single method, but more often blurring boundaries between disciplines.

These approaches demonstrate how socially engaged arts can respond to some of the most pressing social and environmental challenges of our time – from homelessness and forced displacement to climate change and gender inequality – by breaking down silos and bringing together people, sectors, and disciplines in unexpected ways.

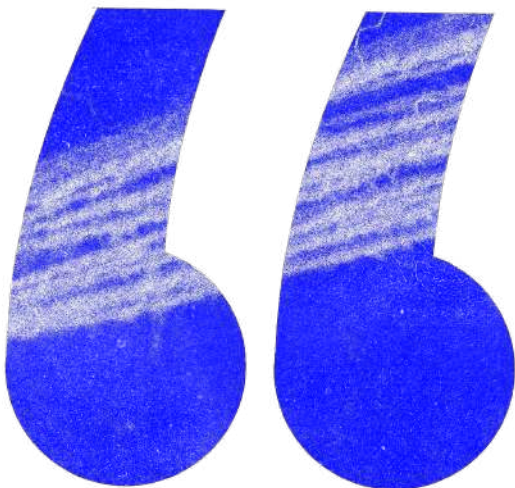


Our learning this year also highlighted the bold and imaginative strategies many organisations are experimenting with. We encountered models that bridge divides in increasingly polarised contexts, challenge harmful or exclusionary narratives, and place communities at the centre of decision-making and creative direction. Many are rethinking governance itself, testing community-led structures and flatter hierarchies that reimagine cultural institutions as democratic infrastructures grounded in co-creation and power-sharing. Others are working systemically, convening artists alongside journalists, researchers, chefs, educators, scientists, and organisers to address complex issues holistically.

These encounters have made visible that socially engaged arts do not sit neatly inside a single discipline or sector, and that their impact often emerges from working across boundaries rather than within them. Even the terminology varies widely. Practitioners may identify with community arts, participatory arts, activism or avoid labels altogether. This diversity and variability often make this field harder to define, complicating efforts to build visibility, understanding, and long-term structural support.

These reflections strengthened a conviction we held at the outset: that developing a shared framework or set of reference points for socially engaged arts could be valuable, not to fix the field into a single definition, but to create a common ground from which recognition and structural support can grow. Importantly, we believe this work must be shaped with practitioners and by the field, not imposed from outside.

To contribute to this, we have commissioned a major research project to deepen understanding of how socially engaged arts take shape across Europe and to map the impacts, challenges, needs, and emerging trends identified by practitioners. By inviting practitioners across the continent to contribute their experiences, we hope the resulting insights will generate shared points of reference that strengthen visibility and support more effective advocacy for the structural conditions the field needs. The findings will be published later in 2026.



Klaus Fruchtnis
Director,
Socially Engaged Arts Program
Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso

Being part of the Alliance enables a genuinely collective reflection on the role of socially engaged arts in contemporary European societies.

What we value most is the shared capacity to articulate common narratives, exchange learning across contexts, and build a stronger collective voice for practices that sit at the intersection of artistic excellence, civic engagement and social innovation. Working collaboratively strengthens our own strategic thinking, helps us situate local and national initiatives within a broader European perspective, and supports the development of more coherent advocacy approaches. Beyond our individual programmes, the Alliance contributes to structuring a shared ecosystem, fostering dialogue between funders, practitioners and policy actors, and reinforcing the legitimacy and visibility of socially engaged arts within wider cultural and public policy debates.



Resourcing Change-makers for Lasting Impact

We designed the Fellowship drawing on the knowledge of our foundation partners and on insights from an early survey shared with 170+ representatives across the field. A consistent message from both was that many socially engaged arts organisations across Europe were working under significant strain. This understanding shaped our starting point: to create funding mechanisms that directly addressed the constraints practitioners faced.

The applications we received reinforced these initial assumptions. They revealed how organisations are navigating political uncertainty, unstable funding environments, and the pressures of sustaining long-term, community-centred work with limited resources. Even when funding is available, project grant timeframes often do not align with the long-term, emerging needs of community-centred work. Many are stretched thin, even as they continue to hold space for communities, build relationships across divides, and experiment with new forms of governance, collaboration, and co-creation.

We designed the Fellowship's funding model to strengthen both the Fellow's capacity to participate and the organisation's capacity to grow. First, we prioritised support that would contribute to building organisational stability during the Fellowship. We recognised that many leaders rarely have the protected time needed to fully engage in a programme like this, and that supporting their organisations directly would enable them to participate meaningfully. By reallocating internal resources, Fellows carved out time to immerse themselves in the programme without placing additional strain on their teams.

Alongside this, we offered a second grant to strengthen the organisation's position to address a core strategic challenge or seize a pivotal opportunity central to its mission. By tackling an issue that is both timely and central to its mission, the grant aims to support organisations in consolidating, expanding, deepening, or piloting emerging areas of work, strengthening their capacity to deliver lasting, positive change.

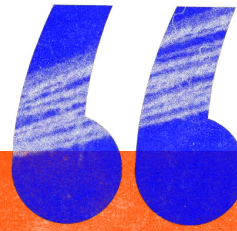
Although the Fellowship is still in its preliminary stages, we are already seeing what this type of support can make possible. Fellows have shared how the funding has allowed them to engage more fully with the programme, create space for reflection, and deepen relationships within their organisations and across the cohort. For some, the support has enabled experimentation with approaches that had previously felt out of reach; for others, it has offered much-needed breathing room to strengthen internal structures after years of rapid, resource-strained growth. As the programme develops, we will continue to learn from Fellows' experiences to better understand how this kind of support can strengthen organisations in practice.

These early insights reaffirm that meaningful support for socially engaged arts thrives when funders embrace risk, prioritise experimentation, and value process as much as outcomes. Organisations working in this way may not follow conventional models of impact or growth. Yet their ability to convene diverse actors, maintain long-term relationships, and sustain work rooted in care is vital to the wider ecosystem.

In this context, the rationale for our decision to tailor support for organisations becomes clearer. Organisations serve as key conveners, bringing together artists, communities, and a range of partners to imagine new possibilities. Their ability to hold these relationships, create conditions for collaboration and sustain long-term work is central to the field's resilience. We believe that investing in their structures and the time they need to nurture this work is not only support for individual organisations but also a contribution to the sustainability of the wider ecosystem.

But the Fellowship’s scope extends beyond financial resources. Our survey of the field revealed deep needs for connection and support. Fellows across Europe face daily challenges: managing their teams sustainably, communicating with diverse audiences, and confronting threats from hostile political environments.

Socially engaged arts organisations thrive through continuous learning from experienced trainers and from one another. We designed the Fellowship as a space where Fellows can grow by understanding their impact, leading holistically, telling their stories, and advocating for their practice. By building connections among socially engaged arts organisations across Europe, we create opportunities for inspiration through shared experiences.



Andrej Nosov
Director
Heartefact



Being part of the Fellowship has been a deeply grounding and strengthening experience for me and for Heartefact. It offered a rare opportunity to pause and critically reflect on our position, responsibilities, and vulnerabilities while working in politically and economically fragile contexts. What felt especially empowering were the exchanges with other Fellows – conversations marked by trust, openness, and a shared willingness to question rather than perform certainty.

Through these encounters, we began to see our own challenges more clearly, but also as part of a wider collective experience. The Fellowship has opened space for hope: not as optimism, but as a practice of solidarity, care, and mutual learning that allows resilience to be imagined and built together, beyond isolation and mere survival.

Damien McGlynn
Director
Create



The opportunity to be part of the Fellowship has connected our organisation to a whole new cohort of like-minded peers across Europe. In challenging times, it is profoundly important to be able to connect, reflect and build new alliances with others working in socially engaged art to construct new models of practice that will be resilient and effective in the future.

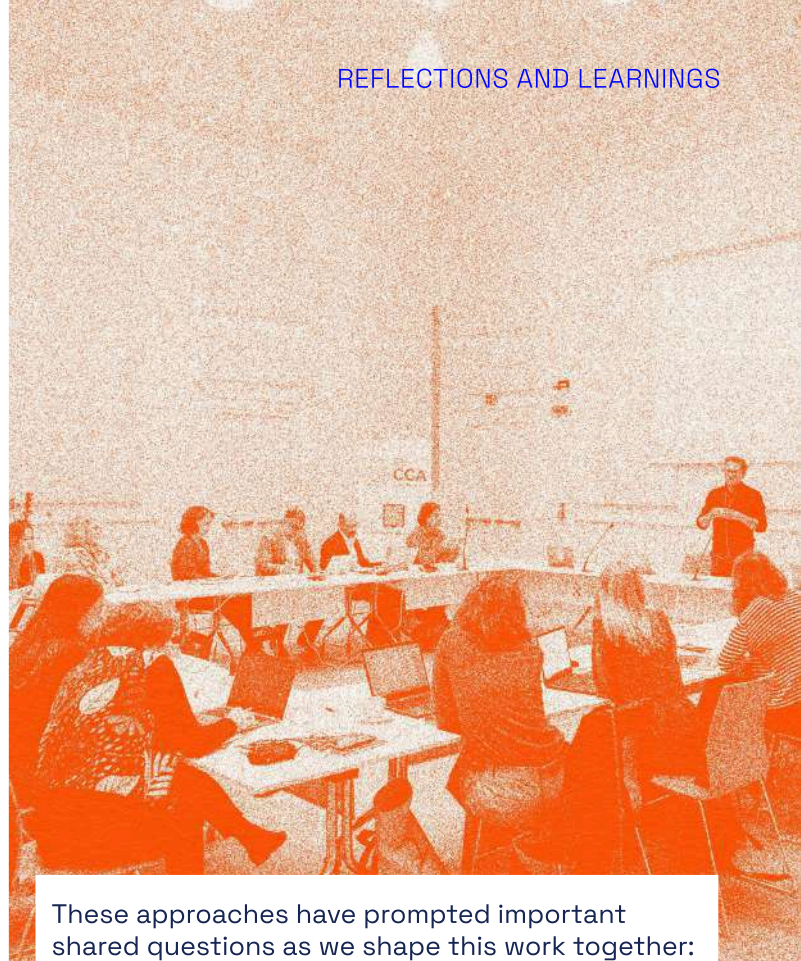
Already, the engagement with other Fellows, the team delivering the programme, and the members of the Alliance has posed vital questions and provided a structure to explore new possibilities on an international level. I feel the Fellowship provides our organisation with a unique platform for growth and renewal.

Bridging Practice and Policy

In 2025, the Alliance stepped into the advocacy arena, a significant milestone in our mission to secure greater recognition and structural support for socially engaged arts. We entered this space fully aware that advocacy is complex, context-specific, and understood very differently across the sector. Yet we also recognise that strengthening advocacy efforts and building greater visibility and shared understanding of this field is essential for the long-term structural change needed for socially engaged arts to thrive, and that this work must be carried out together with practitioners, not for them.

With advocacy at the heart of the Fellowship programme, our role has been to support Fellows in strengthening their advocacy capacities in ways that remain true to the integrity of their work and better equip them to champion the issues that matter most to their communities. The diversity within the cohort reflects a wide range of approaches to driving change: some work at the margins of policy processes, others collaborate closely with local government, and still others operate in contexts where public visibility entails personal or political risk.

The heart of their approach to change is artistic work, made by and with the community. Arts and culture mediate among diverse perspectives, from grassroots actors to high-level local decision-makers. By convening these very different individuals, they create a common ground for communication. At the same time, they model diverse ways of being in the world. By provoking and inspiring, socially engaged arts can transform people's perceptions. While this approach does not always translate easily into more conventional advocacy strategies, it is a unique strength of socially engaged art.



These approaches have prompted important shared questions as we shape this work together: How can Fellows advocate for change without becoming instrumentalised by external agendas? And how can they enter policy spaces without compromising the values, ethics, and methods that define their practice? These questions have been central to our collective learning this year.

A core focus of our advocacy efforts has been to elevate Fellows' practices and the impact of their organisations' activities on the communities they work with. Their varied methods, civic imaginaries, and artistic approaches demonstrate the breadth and richness of the field. Our approach centres Fellows' own language, stories, and perspectives, because their voices are the most authentic and meaningful drivers of change. Doing this has required deep listening on our part. Fellows describe their work using different vocabularies and methodologies, and they articulate impact in multiple ways. This plurality enriches our understanding of the field and challenges us to communicate its complexity accurately and carefully.

In parallel to supporting Fellows, we have begun expanding our engagement with policymakers at the EU and European levels, while also supporting foundation partners to champion the field in their own environments. By connecting these two layers of engagement, we aim to bridge practice and policy to ensure that policy is informed by practice, and practice is enabled by policy.



Sophie Archereau
Administrative Director
L'âge de la tortue



Being part of this Fellowship programme is both a personal and professional growth opportunity. It is an extremely enriching, high-quality, and engaging learning experience, grounded in peer exchange and the quality of interactions within the group.

The Fellowship offers a real opportunity for visibility for my organisation and our work, helping us engage more strongly with national and European dynamics and opening up new possibilities for encounters and collaboration.

Szilvia Kochanowski
Programme Manager
European Cultural Foundation



At the European Cultural Foundation, we value the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts as a natural extension of our longstanding mission to foster a European sense of belonging, solidarity, and democratic resilience through culture. The Alliance and its Fellows strongly resonate with our own work: many reflect trajectories we have supported over decades, from early mobility grants to cross-border collaboration, now recognised as leaders of social transformation.

Working collaboratively through the Alliance strengthens our own work by linking long-term grantmaking experience with shared learning, co-investment, and advocacy—drawing on ECF's expertise and connection to Brussels and EU institutions. For the wider sector, this approach helps shift narratives, unlock new resources, and elevate socially engaged arts as vital force for cohesion, empathy, and change.



Building Alliances, Cultivating Trust, and Nurturing Long-term Commitments

We began the year with 11 foundation partners and grew to 13 by December, presenting a clear and encouraging sign of the philanthropy sector's belief in the power of collective action. Each partner has contributed far more than financial support; they have brought deep expertise, invaluable contextual understanding, and a shared commitment to advancing socially engaged arts across Europe. This collective wisdom has been fundamental to every step of our progress this year.

Throughout the year, we convened five Steering Committee meetings, providing a space for partners to shape strategic direction, ensure accountability, and steward the Alliance's mission. We also established three working groups, co-designing and advancing specific strands of work and ensuring collaboration remained deeply embedded in our approach. In addition, three foundations – Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation and Fondazione Cariplo – together with the Network of European Foundations, served on the Executive Committee, working closely with the Programme Manager on programme delivery and strategic decision-making. Together, these governance structures reflect a growing sense of shared ownership and a genuine commitment to joint leadership.

This year, we have seen the trust between foundation partners deepen in ways that have strengthened our collaboration. Working across diverse contexts, organisational cultures, and priorities is never simple, yet the willingness to listen, adapt, and seek common ground has laid the foundation for mature, collaborative decision-making. This trust has enabled us to engage openly with difficult questions and to move forward with a distinct sense of collective purpose.

We also recognise that the Alliance’s goals are ambitious and will require time to fulfil. Building the foundations for long-term, sustainable impact, while essential, cannot be rushed. We understand the constraints within which foundations operate, particularly the importance of demonstrating proof of concept in the initial stages of a programme. The promising outcomes emerging this year will strengthen the case for continued investment. In contrast, our commitment to flexibility, learning, and iterative refinement will keep the Alliance responsive to new insights and learnings.

As we prepare for the launch of a second edition, our commitment to collaborative governance remains central. In the year ahead, partners will co-develop the strategic direction for 2027 and beyond, and we welcome new members who share our vision for the future. At a time of increasing fragmentation and uncertainty across Europe, building transnational alliances and nurturing spaces for collaboration is more vital than ever if we are to respond meaningfully to the challenges before us. The Alliance exists precisely to create such a space.

This year reaffirmed a simple but powerful truth: we can achieve far more together than any of us could achieve alone.



Matteo Bagnasco
Culture Goal Manager
Fondazione Compagnia
di San Paolo

The Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation has decided to join the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts because, from the very beginning, it recognised the strong alignment between the Alliance’s mission and the objectives pursued by the Foundation within the strategic priorities of the Mission “Promoting Active Participation.”

This mission works specifically to promote culture as a driver for building a new citizenry, to extend and diversify the social base involved in civic, cultural, and democratic life. The value of participating in a European-level network with other Foundations lies in catalysing the efforts of multiple philanthropic organisations at a supranational level, sharing experiences and strengthening the networks of beneficiary entities, as well as developing the social role of art and culture, including open dialogue across Europe.

Embracing a Learning Culture

As a new collaborative initiative still in its initial stages, learning is essential to helping us better understand the real impact of our work; what has worked, what has not and what should be adapted. Embracing a culture of learning is a commitment to improvement and accountability.

This year, we appointed New Silk Roads as our learning partner. They have developed a new impact and learning framework that will guide a thorough evaluation of the Alliance’s first 18 months of activities. This evaluation will assess the effectiveness of our work, including the Fellowship programme, our advocacy, and the Alliance’s added value as a pooled fund for foundation partners. The approach taken by New Silk Roads will gather and synthesise all the perspectives contained within the programme, from the Fellows, their teams, and local communities to our foundation partners.

A shared starting point for this learning journey is the recognition that the impact of a Fellowship and advocacy programme unfolds over a long continuum of change. Much of the transformation generated through this work, whether shifts in trust, community relationships, civic participation, or emerging policy conversations, is slow, relational, and not easily captured through traditional impact frameworks. Advocacy, in particular, advances through incremental steps: changing narratives, forging alliances, and creating the conditions for future structural shifts rather than producing immediate outcomes. We also see the Alliance as one contributor within a much wider ecosystem of organisations advancing socially engaged arts across Europe.

Our commitment to learning means creating intentional spaces for reflection, sense-making, and adaptive decision-making. These spaces strengthen our impact as an Alliance, provide foundation partners with actionable insights, and invite Fellows, partners, and implementers to shape the programme’s evolution. This helps us steward resources responsibly, direct them where they matter most, and stay responsive to what we learn along the way.

FINANCES

Income

Over the course of the 2024–2026 programme period, the Alliance secured €2,190,000* in total income, thanks to the contributions of 13 foundation partners who supported this work.

*Amounts pledged to the Alliance as of December 2025. All figures are provisional.



Expenditure

Item	2024	2025
Grants	-	€ 420,000
Fellowship Programme	€ 58,866	€ 119,537
Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement	€ 22,570	€ 103,595
Communications	€ 51,184	€ 75,231
Learning and Evaluation	-	€ 38,006
Staff	€ 7,200	€ 84,398
Administration	€ 26,511	€ 41,310
Total	€ 166,331	€ 882,076.48

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Alliance for

**Socially
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The Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts is hosted by the Network of European Foundations.