Visions for the Future

Cultural Centre Challenges

FULCRUM

Below you find six challenges with a selection of possible approaches and corresponding steps that cultural centres across Europe have imagined or implemented to address these challenges.

Click on a challenge to **explore possible approaches** and take concrete steps forward.

Polarisation and Dialogue | Shrinking budgets | Staff Burnout

Extremist Ideologies | Excessive bureaucracy | Struggle for sustainability

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BACKGROUND

About this tool

This interactive toolkit was created by the FULCRUM project partners during the second session of the Visions for the Future process. It gathers insights, creative strategies, and real-life experiences from cultural workers across Europe who came together to collectively map ways of addressing six shared challenges: sustainability, polarization, burnout, excessive bureaucracy, extremist ideologies, and financial instability.

Each challenge includes multiple approaches, practical steps, and real quotes from participants. The aim is not to offer universal answers but to spark new ways of thinking and working - grounded in what people are already doing, struggling with, and imagining together.

The toolkit is meant to be interactive. We invite you to explore, reflect, adapt, and most importantly - contribute. Use the Community Wall at the end of every challenge to share your own strategies, failures, insights, or provocations. Our hope is that this becomes a living, evolving toolkit of collective intelligence that grows as more cultural workers engage with it.

Time is short, but ideas are long-lasting. Let's test what's possible and build the future of cultural work together.

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Polarisation and dialogue

Polarisation and Dialogue

"It's hard to host dialogue when society is polarised."

This challenge emerged from collective reflection across European cultural centres. Participants described the difficulty of holding space for meaningful conversations in times of social division, online radicalisation, and algorithmic bubbles.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

- **Create Conditions for Safe Dialogue**
- **Build Facilitation Capacity**
- **Facilitate Encounters Across Difference**
- **Normalise Everyday Dialogue**

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Create conditions for safe dialogue

An approach to Polarisation and Dialogue

Create Conditions for Safe Dialogue

Start with co-creating rules of engagement, codes of conduct, and shared expectations within your organisation/community. Start with the basics. A participatory process helps everyone agree on how to talk.

Step 1

Launch a co-creation process to build a ‘code of engagement’ with your team and regular visitors. Invite diverse voices from your centre to brainstorm and articulate shared values. The aim is not only to prevent harm, but to foster dignity and inclusion. Co-creation ensures buy-in and relevance.

Step 2

Start with basic ground rules everyone can agree on (e.g. respectful language, active listening).

These foundational agreements lower the emotional temperature and help people feel safer. Don’t overcomplicate it - clarity and simplicity increase adoption.

Step 3

Host a check-in session to test the new format and collect feedback.

Trial runs create learning opportunities. Use creative formats to encourage participation and ensure marginalised voices are heard. Be transparent about changes you implement based on feedback.

Step 4

Visibly post these rules in your centre and introduce them at each event.

This reinforces your values and sets expectations clearly. Repetition and visibility turn new norms into culture.

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Build facilitation capacity

An approach to Polarisation and Dialogue

Build Facilitation Capacity

Empower your staff to lead safe, respectful conversations by building moderation and facilitation skills.

"To achieve safe space for the community, it must be practiced inside the organisation."

Step 1

Identify 2–3 people in your team to receive training in moderation/facilitation.

Start with those who are motivated and open. External or peer-led trainings can provide both technique and moral support. This investment pays off across multiple programmes.

Step 2

Host a staff session for sharing experiences and skills.

Peer learning fosters a culture of curiosity and care. Ask: What do we fear? What helps us stay grounded during conflict? This helps teams build trust internally before facilitating externally.

Step 3

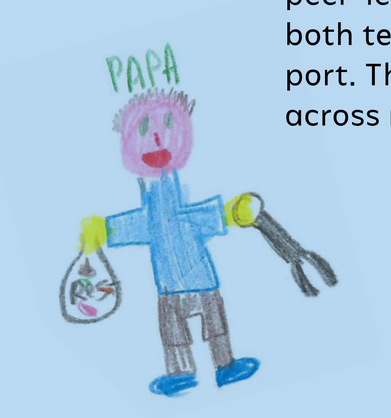
Practice in low-stakes environments (e.g. hobby group meetings).

Small-scale experiments give space to fail and learn. Use real-life community settings that are less charged to build confidence.

Step 4

Set up peer support pairs to reflect on what works and what doesn't.

Reflection helps turn experience into insight. Facilitation is emotional labour - peers can hold space for each other's growth and struggles



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Facilitate encounters across difference

An approach to Polarisation and Dialogue

Facilitate Encounters Across Difference

Design programs that allow people to meet, experience, and understand ‘the other’ across social, political, or cultural divides.

Establish programmes for people to experience others from different backgrounds.

Step 1

Map different communities in your area who rarely interact.

Use empathy, outreach, and curiosity. Don’t assume you know who’s excluded - ask around. Partner with local NGOs, schools, mutual aid networks, youth clubs, migrant associations, faith groups, or disability advocates to broaden your understanding.

Step 2

Design a shared cultural experience (e.g. food event, music jam, co-creation workshop).

Co-creating something joyful creates bonds. Choose accessible, non-verbal formats when possible - art and food often unite where words divide.

Step 3

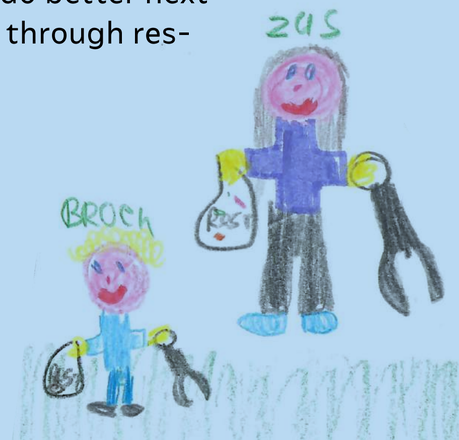
Include a soft dialogue component with facilitation.

Create space to talk - but don’t force it. A question wall in the corridor, storytelling invitation, or guided reflection after activities can gently invite dialogue without pressure.

Step 4

Follow up with a feedback session and adapt future events based on what participants say.

Be accountable to your community. Learning what felt safe or unsafe helps you do better next time. Trust builds through response.



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Normalise everyday dialogue

An approach to Polarisation and Dialogue

Normalise Everyday Dialogue

Weave dialogue into daily activity - make it informal, low-pressure, and routine.

Share good practices - like lunch sessions around what you're passionate about.

Step 1

Start a weekly 'Passion Lunch' where someone shares what they care about (no debate required).

This can be an activity for your staff but also regular activity at your centre. It normalises sharing as a cultural practice. Participants don't have to agree - they only need to listen. Over time, this builds relational resilience.

Step 2

Create a visible suggestion board for future topics.

When people shape the agenda, they engage more. Keep it playful and open-ended to invite surprising contributions.

Step 3

Encourage informal discussion zones (comfy seating, coffee corner, etc).

Surroundings matters. People need physical signals that it's okay to pause, reflect, and talk. Dialogue doesn't have to happen on a stage.

Step 4

Celebrate small moments of connection - take photos, share short stories - in newsletter, social media, hang it in the corridors.

Making dialogue visible reinforces its value. Sharing success stories helps sceptics see the potential and creates a positive feedback loop.

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It is complicated to include everyone (all audiences) as I keep feeling that by making decisions, I exclude someone.

Trust must be rebuilt from within

Facilitating polarising dialogue is hard – whose job is it?

We lack space for debate offline

Society is becoming increasingly polarised, making it difficult to foster meaningful dia-logue and understanding within cultural spaces

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Shrinking budgets

Shrinking Budgets: Creating Cultural Value Under Financial Pressure

"How can we ensure long-term cultural value when we're constantly forced to choose quantity over quality?"

This challenge emerged from reflections across cultural centres struggling with reduced funding and rising expectations. Participants voiced concern over the inability to maintain high-quality, long-term projects with real community impact under budget constraints.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

- **Maximise Impact Through Collaboration**
- **Rethink Event Formats and Prioritisation**
- **Engage Local Authorities and Advocate**
- **Empower Communities to Co-Create**

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Maximise impact through collaboration

An approach to Shrinking Budgets

Maximise Impact Through Collaboration

Build partnerships across sectors and organisations to pool resources, ideas, and infrastructure.

"Cooperating and coming together with partners to create a new approach."

Step 1

Map potential partners in your local ecosystem (libraries, schools, NGOs, small businesses).

Look for shared values and existing infrastructure. Collaboration isn't just financial - it's also logistical, creative, and social.

Step 2

Initiate a pilot project that tests working together.

Start small: co-host a single event or share communication platforms. Build trust through action.

Step 3

Share resources like venues, staff, or funding applications.

Pooling reduces redundancy. A shared technician, newsletter, or stage can create big value with low cost.

Step 4

Formalise the relationship through a joint strategy or memorandum.

Written agreements, even informal ones, help create accountability and ensure shared goals.

Then follow up on them.

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Rethink event formats and prioritisation

An approach to Shrinking Budgets

Rethink Event Formats and Prioritisation

Focus on fewer but deeper events, prioritising quality and sustainability over visibility or scale.

"Priority setting in event planning - how to do more with less."

Step 1

Audit your current events - what's meaningful, what's draining, what's missing?

Not everything needs to continue. Honest reflection creates space for strategic focus.

Step 2

Decide what success means for your centre: impact, inclusion, co-creation, visibility?

Define your values clearly so you can choose your battles and allocate resources accordingly.

Step 3

Design leaner formats - e.g. event series, hybrid models, volunteer-led components.

Less can be more - multiple small touchpoints might engage better than a big, expensive annual event.

Step 4

Communicate the 'why' behind your choices to funders and community.

Transparency builds understanding and support. It also helps you advocate for more realistic expectations.

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An approach to Shrinking Budgets

Engage Local Authorities and Advocate

Develop strategic relationships with local governments to influence budget planning and long-term cultural policy.

"More meaningful redistribution of municipal budget for culture."

Step 1

Understand the city's budget process and identify key decision-makers.

Municipal budgets aren't mysterious - learn the cycles, who votes, and what criteria they use.

Step 2

Organise cultural actors to speak with one voice in public forums.

Check for already active organisations. Connect with them, communicate your message. Check for existing networks, associations.

A unified front shows strength. Municipalities are more likely to listen when the sector speaks together.

Step 3

Collect stories and data about the real impact of culture on your town.

Emotional stories + local statistics = persuasive power. Highlight youth engagement, visible changes, talk to the community, ask for their stories, present them in a visible way. Go beyond the economic value.

Step 4

Propose new models for funding - e.g. shared service centres, participatory budgeting, cascade grants, micro grants, or pooled grants.

Inspire change by showing it's not just about asking for more, but about spending smarter.

Step 5

Persistently invite decision makers to attend events and experience your work firsthand.

Seeing your centre in action is more persuasive than any report. Make them feel welcomed, not just obligated. A shared cultural moment builds empathy and opens dialogue.

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An approach to Shrinking Budgets

Empower Communities to Co-Create

Activate citizens and local groups to contribute content, energy, and micro-resources to cultural programming.

"Understanding the characteristics of potential participants"

Step 1

Identify and engage active community members or local artists.

They may not consider themselves stakeholders yet - but with the right invitation, they often are.

Step 2

Design small grant schemes or idea challenges for local initiatives. Do not concentrate on the finances only - grant can be in a form of any resource you can offer.

Micro-grants spark creativity and ownership. A small resource investment can bring big return in commitment.

Step 3

Host co-creation workshops to gather ideas and resources for events and formats. Check what worked in the past for others.

Facilitation is key. Let people shape what they want to see, and support them in making it real.

Step 4

Provide recognition, visibility, skill-building and networking opportunities for contributors.

People give more when they feel valued. Say thank you publicly and make their contribution and impact visible.

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The pressure to do more with less creates exhaustion

There are fewer opportunities for high quality events because of limited budgets

How can we be effective with limited budget?

Local authorities ask for visibility, but don't always offer support

How to tackle the limited budget of participants

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Staff burnout

Staff Burnout: Recharging Energy and Creativity

"We're losing our creative edge because we're exhausted."

This challenge reflects a widespread reality: cultural sector workers are exhausted. Burnout isn't just an individual problem - it has structural, financial, and cultural roots. When people are overwhelmed, creativity and collaboration suffer. But there are ways to build healthier environments that protect mental well-being.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

- **Psychological Safety & Recognition**
- **Reimagine Work Rhythms**
- **Make Culture Work Visible**
- **Design for Collective Sustainability**

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Psychological safety & recognition

An approach to Staff Burnout

Psychological Safety & Recognition

Create an internal culture where people can speak up, feel valued, and admit limits without shame.

"We have a team that takes time to talk. That makes all the difference."

Step 1

Initiate regular team check-ins and group reflections.

Make space to talk about workload and emotions - not just projects. Normalize sharing how people feel.

Step 2

Encourage open communication between staff and management.

Leaders should model vulnerability, not perfection. Trust grows when power is transparent and human.

Step 3

Celebrate small wins and individual contributions publicly.

Creativity thrives when people feel seen. Recognition builds energy without needing a budget.

Step 4

Develop a peer-to-peer appreciation ritual.

Let staff thank each other regularly. A gratitude wall, shout-out board, or even 5-minute end-of-week round can shift energy.

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Reimagine work rhythms

An approach to Staff Burnout

Reimagine Work Rhythms

Introduce flexible models that respect energy levels, neurodiversity, and recovery time.

"Allow people to manage their energy - flexible hours, remote options."

Step 1

Map current time-use and energy cycles across your team.

Where do people feel most stretched or drained? Start with listening before imposing a fix.

Step 2

Pilot flexible work arrangements.

Test remote work, recorded meetings, 4-day weeks, or non-linear schedules. Design for people, not just outputs.

Step 3

Encourage micro-breaks and proper use of holiday time.

People often need permission to rest. Leaders should model this visibly.

Step 4

Build project timelines around realistic energy, not unrealistic ambition.

Creativity needs incubation. Plan for rest and recovery like you plan for deadlines.

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Make culture work visible

An approach to Staff Burnout

Make Culture Work Visible

Change narratives to show the real worth and effort behind cultural work.

"Talk to that one weird uncle - and everyone else - about the worth of culture."

Step 1

Identify cultural labour that goes unseen - emotional support, admin, care work.

Much of cultural work is invisible and anonymous. Naming it helps validate it.

Step 2

Develop new public rituals that reveal and honour cultural labour in the community.

For example, host an annual "Invisible Work Day", where the backstage, planning, and care aspects of cultural production are showcased through exhibitions, storytelling, or live mapping. Invite citizens to walk through your centre's internal operations - not to entertain, but to create understanding and empathy. This kind of transparency builds collective respect for cultural work beyond final products.

Step 3

Create a visible list of invisible tasks and care work - update it regularly as part of your internal operations.

When every contribution is tracked and made visible - from emotional labour to admin prep - it shifts the narrative around who carries what. This isn't a tool for policing, but for honouring what gets done beyond titles and job descriptions.

Step 4

Link recognition to resourcing.

Create a dedicated care work recognition track in your staffing and planning process. Care work includes emotional support, conflict mediation, mentoring, community, and creating safe environments. Develop a set of indicators and reflective tools to help staff identify and name these efforts. Integrate care responsibilities into job descriptions, feedback rounds, and annual reviews - not as extras, but as essential aspects of your institution's sustainability and relational quality. If something matters, it deserves time, budget, and staff. Make values visible in your structure by allocating dedicated hours, compensation, or collective acknowledgements in key moments like annual meetings or public reports.

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Design for collective sustainability

An approach to Staff Burnout

Design for Collective Sustainability

Don’t fix burnout alone - create structures of mutual care, reflection, and boundary-setting that support long-term sustainability for individuals and the team.

"Strong leadership means naming limits and modelling balance."

Step 1

Organise burnout prevention workshops or supervision sessions. Invite external facilitators or peer-led support groups. These are not luxuries - they’re maintenance.

They give staff permission to voice pressures and refresh their own boundaries, making emotional hygiene a shared responsibility.

Step 2

Set and protect boundaries as a team – e.g. no weekend emails, creative off-days. Boundaries are not about restriction - they’re about recovery.

Make this a cultural shift, not a policy note: embed boundary-setting in leadership behaviour, team charters, and shared rituals.

Step 3

Identify and support emerging leaders who model care and balance. Leadership is not about overwork.

Support those who protect others’ well-being. Reward and recognize relational work - not just productivity. This helps redefine influence in sustainable ways.

Step 4

Create team rituals that mark transition, closure, and rest. A shared lunch, reflection walk, or art-making ritual can signal it’s okay to pause. Culture can care for the carers.

These rituals build collective rhythm and shared meaning, reminding the team that recovery is not separate from the work - it is part of it.

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Our teams feel burned out

Lack of mental well-being

Too much pressure, not enough rest

We need to feel seen and appre-ciated

Struggle to stay creative and productive

Work-life balance does not exist

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Extremist ideologies

Extremist Ideologies: Belonging and Dialogue

"How do we make our centre a space where nobody needs to radicalize to feel seen?"

Rising polarisation and extremist views can often take root where people feel excluded, unheard, disconnected or unrepresented. Cultural centres have the unique potential to serve as buffers and bridges by fostering meaningful belonging, deep community connections, and constructive conversations across difference.

Addressing this challenge doesn't mean confronting hate head-on with slogans or campaigns - it means cultivating environments where no one needs extremism to feel seen. By investing in relationships, shared rituals, practical collaboration, and deep listening, cultural centres can become spaces where the roots of radicalisation are gently replaced by community, purpose, and trust.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

- **Dialogue Opportunities**
- **Redesign the Institutional Image from the Outside In**
- **Foster Unexpected Encounters Through Everyday Activities**
- **Equip Cultural Workers to Understand and Disarm Extremist Logic**

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Dialogue opportunities

An approach to Extremist Ideologies

Dialogue Opportunities

Set up long-term dialogue circles where unheard voices meet regularly in facilitated spaces designed for listening, not debating. These circles create room for mutual presence and empathy in place of polarisation.

"Develop good dialogue opportunities."

Step 1

Map overlooked or hesitant groups in your local area.

Think beyond demographics - include those who feel alienated by institutional formats or public spaces. Reach out through existing community activists/ organisations. Make a list of groups with whom trust must be slowly built.

Step 2

Invite them into structured listening circles, not to debate, but to share realities.

Provide guidelines ahead of time. Frame participation as an opportunity to speak without being corrected. Establish rotating facilitation.

Step 3

Develop symbolic rituals that make everyone feel equally welcome - such as shared food rules, round seating, or co-created opening questions.

These practices gently shift the atmosphere so no one feels more entitled to speak or be heard than others. They help create a space where people feel they belong, regardless of their background or role. Let these rituals grow organically from group feedback and community suggestions.

Step 4

Keep it going. Schedule sessions regularly and adapt the format.

Trust comes from repeated encounters. Document changes, acknowledge hard moments, and show visibly how input shapes evolution.

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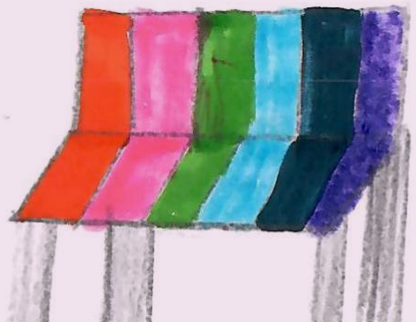

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Redesign the institutional image from the outside In

An approach to Extremist Ideologies

Redesign the Institutional Image from the Outside In

Actively challenge your institution's perceived ideological alignment by reshaping its identity in partnership with the wider community. Let those historically excluded co-define the message.

Step 1

Acknowledge the stereotype: hold an anonymous survey or public discussion to name your image.

You can't shift perception unless you're willing to hear it. Naming the problem out loud disarms it and opens up room for collaborative redefinition.

Step 2

Invite leaders or cultural figures from underrepresented groups to co-curate an event series.

Let them shape formats, language, and outreach - not just participate. Behind every "what" they suggest, take time to ask "why" - this reveals values, needs, and cultural logic that may be different from your own.

Real inclusion means handing over authorship, not just providing a platform.

Step 3

Revise external language and symbols - signage, mission statements, event titles - through community feedback.

Ask how your messaging feels to someone outside your cultural vocabulary. If the message is clear, but the tone alienates, change the tone - not the vision.

Avoid language that sounds superior, overly moralistic, or academic - it can reinforce distance or defensiveness instead of inviting connection.

Step 4

Create an advisory group involving people who aren't usually part of your decision-making.

Invite individuals who bring different lived experiences, including those who may feel distant from your institution. Ensure their role is meaningful, supported, and compensated - not symbolic. Over time, this group can help your centre stay rooted in local realities and build trust beyond your existing circles.

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Foster unexpected encounters through everyday activities

An approach to Extremist Ideologies

Foster Unexpected Encounters Through Everyday Activities

Use every day, low-threshold activities like meals or casual gatherings to bring people together without pressure. Connection forms first through shared moments, not shared opinions.

"Food is a good connector."

Step 1

Start a weekly open meal or "diversity café" with no agenda beyond being together.

The purpose is co-presence, not persuasion. Neutral, recurring gatherings can build bridges before conversations even begin.

Step 2

Use public holidays, rituals, or shared cultural moments as entry points for gatherings.

Anchor events in familiar rhythms to reduce social anxiety. Blend diverse traditions around a common calendar to encourage mutual curiosity.

Step 3

Add soft storytelling elements - invite elders, newcomers, or strangers to casually share something.

Stories travel further than slogans. Let vulnerability be voluntary, but welcome. These informal stories create moments of recognition across difference and allow participants to connect without needing to agree.

Step 4

Create mini-teams of mixed participants to run small tasks together. Practical collaboration deepens connection. Use shared tasks - like setting up chairs or cooking together - as relationship-building tools.

When people contribute side-by-side toward a shared outcome, trust forms through doing rather than talking.

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Equip cultural workers to understand and disarm extremist logic

An approach to Extremist Ideologies

Equip Cultural Workers to Understand and Disarm Extremist Logic

Train staff to recognise the emotional and social mechanics of radicalisation and develop empathetic responses. Building internal awareness increases confidence and prevents escalation.

"Getting the knowledge: how do extremist ideologies work?"

Step 1

Provide training on how extremist ideologies operate - emotionally, psychologically, and linguistically.

Focus on how they offer identity and certainty in uncertain times. Understanding their appeal makes prevention more compassionate and effective.

Step 2

Host peer-learning sessions to share real experiences with polarised encounters.

Let complexity and ambiguity be part of the learning. Facilitators should create space for honesty without shame.

Step 3

Invite counter-narrative practitioners (e.g. former extremists, reformed activists, critical thinkers) to share tools that worked.

Make deradicalisation part of cultural literacy. These stories offer lived insights and rehumanise those seen only as "lost". Deradicalisation isn't about making others think the same way as we do - it's about restoring agency, empathy, and the ability to choose connection over isolation.

Step 4

Establish a community care circle that focuses on proactive connection and inclusion.

Rather than detecting risk, this group listens for silence - noticing who's stopped showing up, who avoids speaking, or whose stories are missing. They become quiet bridge-builders, offering support, checking in with empathy, and flagging structural gaps that might otherwise go unseen.

Prevention is gentler than intervention - and far more effective when built on everyday presence and trust.

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An open house where everyone feels welcome and finds a safe space to express themselves and develop themselves

My cultural centre is relevant to the communities

Food is a good connector!

Encourage dialogue that helps create a just and diverse cultural field

Being of, by, for all

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Excessive bureaucracy

Excessive Bureaucracy

"How to reduce the amount of middle-men for a more successful cultural process."

When cultural work is buried under administrative complexity, it doesn't just waste time - it undermines trust and motivation. Bureaucracy can become a barrier to creativity, inclusion, and effectiveness. But the solution isn't simply "less paperwork" - it's about rethinking relationships with public authorities, building credibility from the ground up, and co-creating systems that serve both transparency and cultural impact.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

- Build Credibility from the Inside Out
- Shift the Relationship with Authorities
- Use Networking Power Strategically
- Rethink the Role of Evaluation and Accountability

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Build credibility from the inside out

An approach to Excessive Bureaucracy

Build Credibility from the Inside Out

Rather than relying solely on external validation, focus on strengthening internal systems, clarity of impact, and confidence within your team.

Trust starts with your own foundation.

"Build the confidence of ourselves."

Step 1

Create simple internal tools for tracking your impact - even if they're not required.

This can include visual overviews, story-based reports, or short testimonials. Having this material ready allows you to show your value without waiting to be asked.

Step 2

Make impact visible through your own channels first - social media, newsletters, meetings.

Speak to your public and stakeholders in clear, human terms. Don't wait for recognition - practice self-recognition as an act of cultural sustainability.

Step 3

Conduct informal peer reviews with other cultural workers. Exchange materials and feedback to raise the quality of your documentation.

It's easier to face bureaucratic filters when you've already translated your value into clear terms.

Step 4

Share these materials directly with public officials or partners before they ask. Pre-empt misunderstanding by offering context, numbers, and stories. Being proactive builds both credibility and trust.

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Build credibility from the inside out

An approach to Excessive Bureaucracy

Shift the Relationship with Authorities

Move from reactive to relational. Stop seeing public officials only as rule-enforcers - instead, involve them early, often, and respectfully.

"Dialogue, conversation with administration and authorities."

Step 1

Map which administrative players actually shape your reality - not just those who sign the forms.

Include desk officers, clerks, mid-level managers - those who interpret rules and handle your files.

Step 2

Invite them to visit your cultural centre, ideally during an event. Let them see the work not just through reports, but through presence and experience. Even a 20-minute informal tour can shift how they perceive your value.

Step 3

Host roundtable conversations between cultural workers and civil servants. Create space for mutual complaints, shared struggles, and co-learning. Understanding each other's constraints is often the first step to reducing them.

Step 4

Create a "cultural glossary" that explains your language, logic, and goals.

Many misunderstandings stem from differences in terminology and timelines. This document can help bridge institutional gaps.

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Build credibility from the inside out

An approach to Excessive Bureaucracy

Use Networking Power Strategically

Some problems can't be solved individually. Use your association, federation, or local network to address bureaucracy collectively.

Step 1

Identify common bureaucratic challenges faced by other organisations.

Create a shared log of recurring paperwork burdens, delays, or inconsistencies.

Step 2

Use this data to advocate more effectively at higher levels. Numbers tell a story.

When five institutions say it, it's anecdotal - when 50 do, it's structural.

Step 3

Ask the networks to draft ready-to-use templates, contracts, assessment tools or policy letters.

These can save hours of repetitive work and ensure consistent messaging.

Step 4

If possible, nominate a representative who regularly liaises with administration of the networks.

This "translator" can carry shared messages, clarify expectations, and reduce friction.

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Build credibility from the inside out

An approach to Excessive Bureaucracy

Rethink the Role of Evaluation and Accountability

Shift from evaluation as a burden to evaluation as a tool for agency. The more you own the process, the less it owns you.

"Establish impact assessment tools, that could be easily accessible to all culture workers."

Step 1

Create a simple, modular evaluation template that can be adapted to different project types.

Focus on outcomes that matter to you - not just funders. Include both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Step 2

Run participatory evaluation sessions with staff and community members. What felt successful?

What do they wish had been different? This makes accountability a shared learning process.

Step 3

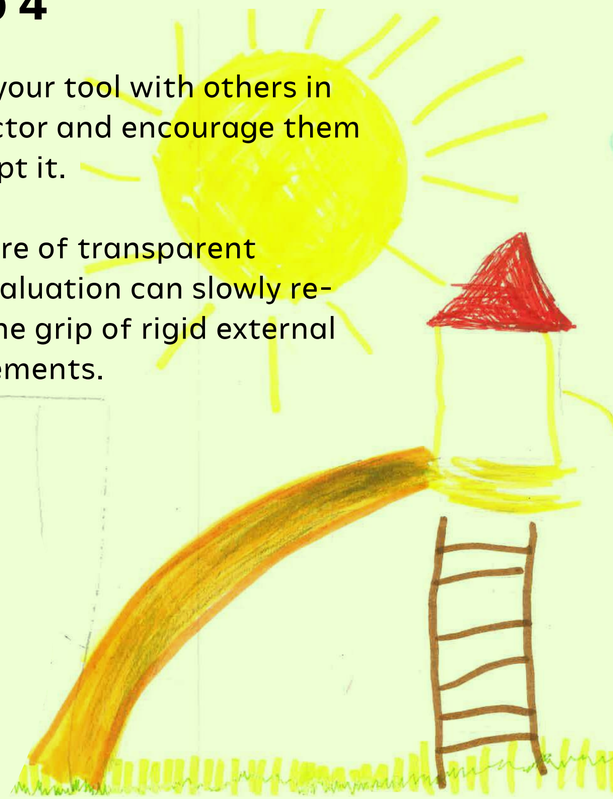
Make the results public - not in formal reports only, but in exhibitions, postcards, short videos. Let evaluation be part of your cultural expression.

It helps change the perception that feedback is just bureaucracy.

Step 4

Share your tool with others in the sector and encourage them to adapt it.

A culture of transparent self-evaluation can slowly reduce the grip of rigid external requirements.



WRITE ON OUR WALL

VOICES OF THE FIELD

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Voices of the field

Cultural sector being trusted for its work and their results

Trust of public authorities

Reduce the amount of middle-men for more successful cultural process

We need to compare with others – how are they dealing with the administrative side, what are their obligations?

Accessible future with stability in political decisions

Establish your own independence, seeking collaborations, not assistance

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Struggle for Sustainability

"The main capability is our own agency and informed action."

How can we make sustainability a lived and shared responsibility - not a side topic or individual burden - but something integrated, visible, and supported across cultural work?

While sustainability is often accepted in principle, in practice it can feel political, overwhelming, or disconnected from daily cultural work. This challenge isn't just about carbon footprints - it's about systems thinking, shared responsibility, and shifting how sustainability is felt, supported, and understood in every aspect of cultural production and community life.

Explore **the approaches below** to respond to this shared concern.

Reframe Sustainability as Cultural Work

Build Internal Foundations for Real Change

Bridge the Bubble to Connect Across Divides

Practice What We Preach - Every Day

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

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Reframe sustainability as cultural work

An approach to Struggle for Sustainability

Reframe Sustainability as Cultural Work

Move sustainability out of the "technical" box and into the core of your cultural mission. Frame it as care for people, place, and time.

"We are still struggling to find solutions, and the first step is to identify and facilitate connections between different community members and explore new practices across arts and sustainability."

Step 1

Map where sustainability already exists in your work - even if it's not called that.

Think: reuse, sharing, seasonal programming, local sourcing, reflection time. This builds confidence and avoids the trap of thinking you're starting from zero.

Step 2

Use storytelling to bring data to life and communicate sustainable choices

Data becomes more powerful when it's paired with stories. Instead of only sharing carbon figures, say: "This meal came from a local farmer 10 km away," or "This exhibit was co-created to reduce waste and foster relationships." People connect to meaning and stories - and these can make the data more relatable and memorable.

Step 3

Invite your audiences to share their own sustainability rituals, tips, or tensions.

This shifts the conversation from prescription to participation. You're not the expert - you're the host.

Step 4

Reflect sustainability in your aesthetic choices, not just operations.

How you decorate, light, travel, perform - it all communicates values. Let your values be visible without preaching.

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Build internal foundations for real change

An approach to Struggle for Sustainability

Build Internal Foundations for Real Change

Without institutional clarity, sustainability work stays informal and fragile. It needs budget lines, leadership commitment, and daily integration.

"The main capability is our own agency and informed action."

Step 1

Establish a cross-role sustainability group within your organization.

Include cleaners, producers, tech crew, educators - everyone who makes things happen. This breaks silos and shares ownership.

Step 2

Create a sustainability strategy with clear priorities and timeline. Avoid trying to do everything - pick 2–3 focus areas that feel urgent and realistic.

Make the plan public and revisit it often.

Step 3

Allocate a real budget line for sustainability - however small. This could cover training, materials, or co-design time.

If there's no budget, sustainability will always be "extra".

Step 4

Review your procurement, purchases, funding applications, and logistics through a sustainability lens.

What values do your purchases reflect? Who benefits from your partnerships? Sometimes structural change starts with small contracts.

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Bridge the Bubble to Connect Across Divides

An approach to Struggle for Sustainability

Bridge the Bubble to Connect Across Divides

Sustainability work gains strength when it opens spaces for people inside and outside the ‘bubble’ to meet, exchange, and learn from each other. Instead of staying in an echo chamber, it must create bridges across generations, roles, and political views - inviting diverse perspectives into the conversation.

"People don’t feel like sustainability work concerns them.“

Step 1

Identify the people not showing up to your events or conversations on sustainability.

Consider generational gaps, cultural references, and accessibility needs. What languages, formats, or messengers might resonate with them? Approach this with openness and empathy, not judgement.

Step 2

Co-host events with groups outside your typical network - gardeners, cafés, religious communities, sports clubs, other kinds of third places.

These spaces hold their own knowledge and values around sustainability. When you co-create instead of invite, you build mutual respect. Cultural centres can act as social bridges - not just venues.

Step 3

Build sustainability into existing community rhythms - farmers’ markets, local celebrations, or weekly youth activities.

Rather than launching something new, attach sustainable practices to what’s already loved and attended.

This makes sustainability feel familiar and useful, not like another campaign.

Step 4

Establish long-term collaborations with non-activist groups that care about place and community - such as housing co-ops, school clubs, or neighbourhood associations.

Embed sustainability goals into existing routines, rather than introducing entirely new ones. Prevention is easier than persuasion: small systemic changes often outlast big campaigns. Shift the work from conversion to co-ownership.

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An approach to Struggle for Sustainability

Practice What We Preach - Every Day

Sustainability must be lived through everyday habits, not just big statements. Model it quietly and consistently.

"Making sustainability an everyday thought without it being overwhelming."

Step 1

Reduce resource use in daily operations and name it. E.g. "We've switched to a shared tool library for set construction."

Normalise choices that reflect your values, even if they're imperfect. Small, visible shifts can ripple outward.

Step 2

Gamify or celebrate small sustainability wins with your community.

Tracking shared travel, repair actions, or local sourcing can build momentum.

Make achievements fun and visible - not another task to be graded.

Step 3

Make sustainability visible behind the scenes. Invite staff or volunteers to co-create signage, materials, or rituals that reflect your values.

This makes sustainability part of your organisational culture, not just your policy.

Step 4

Share what didn't work. Be honest about failed experiments and tough decisions.

It shows leadership through transparency - and invites others into a learning mindset.

WRITE ON OUR WALL

VOICES OF THE FIELD

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People don't feel like sustainability work concerns them

Involving population in different sustainable events/practices/projects

We are still struggling to find solutions and the first step is to identify and facilitate connections between different community members; explore new practices across arts and sustainability

There is a difference between the environmental challenge we face in the world and the small steps we discuss as solutions

Sustainability goals are seen as political – not a neutral common goal

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CREDITS

CREDITS

The text was authored by Anna Maria Ranczakowska based on the materials gathered during the brainstorm, and reviewed by the FULCRUM partners.

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