CREATIVE EUROPE NETWORKS AND BIPOC REPRESENTATION:

Bridging Gaps and Breaking Barriers

What Efforts Can Creative Europe Networks Lead to Strengthen BIPoC Representation in the European Cultural Sector?

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The concept for this work emerged after several years of engagement in the cultural sector, both personally and professionally. As a Person of Colour, I have observed a significant gap between the liberal, cosmopolitan, and inclusive self-awareness of the cultural sector and the actual diversity of those who participate in its activities. While collaborating with the Reset! Network, it became apparent that this issue is not confined to a French context; discussions on the lack of diversity, representation, and inclusion extend across Europe. This raised the question of how EU Cultural Policy, and particularly Networks, could contribute to addressing these disparities.

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GLOSSARY

BIPoC

The acronym BIPoC refers to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It emphasises Black and Indigenous Identities, highlighting the structural discriminations these communities face. As a political term, BIPoC is both, self-defining and empowering.

RACIALISATION

Racialisation is the social process through which individuals or groups are assigned a particular ‘racial’ identity, basing on perceived physical traits or cultural characteristics. Racialisation does not base on biological traits but is a social construct that shapes how people are treated within institutional systems. It creates and maintains power dynamics and social hierarchies, often leading to discrimination and marginalisation of certain communities.

WHITENESS

Whiteness refers to a racialised social identity that is positioned as superior to others within a system of racial hierarchy. It is shaped by social and cultural processes rooted in European colonialism, imperialism, and transatlantic slavery, and is maintained through institutions, ideologies, and everyday practices. Whiteness involves material advantages, such as economic and political power, but also symbolic value, tied to cultural associations of morality and civilisation. This results in benefits for white people that are perceived as societal norms, masking the unjust nature of white dominance.

INTRODUCTION

The cultural sector is crucial for societies, it allows to form social cohesion, new common imaginaries, and provides guidance in societal transformations. In times of multiple crises, cultural expression is of particular importance as it permits to process what has been experienced, to question current events, and to show alternative paths. Via culture, a group can collectively take a critical distance from current events and reflect and react.

Culture also allows one to define and express one's identity, be it at the scale of a small community or a nation. One central challenge here is the necessity to represent correctly, and *the entirety* of a community. Western societies are influenced by structural inequalities that are intricately intertwined with the nation state and its functioning. These structures influence how someone is represented in cultural expression. The cultural sphere is subject to and thus reproduces dominant power structures, which impacts who works in culture and who has the power to make decisions, to resume: whose perspectives are more and whose less represented.

European societies are undergoing a profound shift regarding minority rights. This is tied to the digital age and the opportunities to connect and structure movements that the internet offers. The last decade and a half have seen powerful, globally connected campaigns such as #metoo and #BlackLivesMatter put a spotlight on structural inequalities and change the discourse on them. On the other hand, the claim for more minority rights is increasingly perceived as a threat to a conservative lifestyle. While the call for justice becomes louder, the undermining of these fights is amplified.

This report focuses on the representation of BIPoC communities in European cultural policy. While we focus on racialised people, who are part of European societies partly as a result of the continent's colonial heritage, we also touch on the broader concepts of diversity and inclusion. The European cultural sector's particularity is that it does not have the same scope of action as national governments. EU cultural policy cannot establish binding laws, as this competence is reserved to the member states.

The treaty of Lisbon determines the division of the domains in which the EU has the power to make decisions. There are some in which member states must implement EU decisions, and others in which the EU only supports the coordination of a sector. There are three categories of competences (*Division of Competences Within the European Union | EUR-Lex*, n.d.):

I. Exclusive competences
The EU alone can legislate and adopt binding acts

II. Shared competences
The EU and Member States can legislate and adopt legally binding acts

III. Supporting competences
The EU can only intervene to support, coordinate, or complement the action of its Member States

Culture is part of the third category (*EU Culture Policy - EUR-Lex*, n.d.), the EU defines its role in cultural policy as follows:

While individual Member States are responsible for their own cultural policies, the role of the EU is to help tackle common challenges, ranging from the impact of digital technologies and the need to ensure fair remuneration for artists on digital platforms, to the need to support innovation in the cultural and creative sectors. The EU can also help these sectors recover in the event of a crisis, and foster their resilience to make them more sustainable in the future.

As the EU is not entitled to create its own cultural policies, it tries to address challenges that the whole European cultural sector faces through soft mechanisms. Much of this work is channeled through the Creative Europe funding programme, which "supports cross-border cooperation and networking activities for all cultural and creative sectors and co-finances important platforms and networks" (*Cultural and Creative Sectors*, n.d.). In its cultural strand, the programme finances cooperative projects, short term mobility of artists and cultural workers, platforms for the promotion of emerging artists as well as networks. Networks are representative organisations for the European cultural and creative sectors; they gather and document the challenges a specific cultural sector faces and communicate them to the European Commission.

They are therefore a strategic object of analysis to understand the representation of BIPoC communities in the European cultural sector. This work analyses whether the Creative Europe networks have identified the issue of the representation of minorities, and more specifically BIPoC communities, and whether they have developed strategies to respond to it. The work does so at the hands of six semi-directive interviews that have been led with cultural professionals working for, or in close contact with Creative Europe networks, cultural professionals focusing on the representation of BIPoC communities as well as a professional working for the European Commission. **Laurent Bigarella** is the coordinator of the Reset! network and **Lars Ebert** the secretary general of the Culture Action Europe network. Reset! is a relatively young network defending the interests of independent cultural and media players across Europe. Culture Action Europe represents European cultural networks. **Sophie Dowden** does not represent any network directly, but drew on her expertise as a freelancer for various European networks, with whom she works on diversity and inclusion strategies. **Kay Ferdinand** and **Felix Meister** represent cultural initiatives that work specifically on the representation of BIPoC communities in the cultural sector. Kay Ferdinand is the co-founder of Black Artist Database, a UK-based initiative that works to represent more black artists in the electronic music sector. Felix Meister is Berlin-based and works with several cultural structures on the integration of BIPoC youth in cultural projects. Finally, **Martha Gutiérrez** works for the *Relais Culture Europe*, where she is responsible for the Creative Europe programme. The *Relais Culture Europe* is a public organisation embodying the Creative Europe office on the French territory. The latter implies that they support and accompany French cultural structures that aim to apply for Creative Europe funding.

THE REPRESENTATION OF BIPOC COMMUNITIES IN THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL SECTOR

What Place Do BIPoC Communities Occupy in the European Cultural Sphere — A Historical Perspective

A Definition of Culture

As Brooks (2012) affirms, culture is “a signifying system through which necessarily [...] a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (p. 18). At a rather elemental degree:

> **Culture can be defined as the congeries of values, attitudes, behaviors, language, music, art, stories, and other conventions that govern or characterize a society or identifiable group within a society.** (Brooks, 2012, p.18).

Culture is the conglomerate of the expressions, may they be linguistic, musical, or cinematographic, that are shared by a group, allowing us to identify with this given group. The maintenance of a hegemonic culture has historically been an intrinsic part of nation states (Dubois, 2015). Narrating the history and achievements of a community via art- or literary works has been crucial for the construction of modern nations. This has also been the driving force behind the beginnings of what we call cultural policy today. It legitimises the nation via ‘*the inside*’, by giving its citizens a story to identify with, along with its materialisation through artistic expression. The narration also legitimises the nation towards ‘*the outside*’, as it allows to differentiate towards other communities.

This needs to be set in the context of the imperial history of Western Europe. To focus on the representation of BIPoC communities in the cultural sector implies understanding their position in contemporary European societies. Western European nation states have been imperialist for centuries, which provoked waves of migration during and after colonisation. Colonialism was embedded in racial theory, suggesting that Caucasian civilisations are the most developed and sophisticated, conferring them features such as reason and logic. At the same time, people of color were said to be less developed and under civilised, virtually close to animalistic nature. This thinking justified the colonial project, and still profoundly impacts today’s social organisation (Baumeister, 2021).

Indeed, BIPoC communities still endure structural racism and discrimination on a regular basis. The EU Anti-Racism Plan 2020-2025, that was drafted in reaction to the #BlackLivesMatter protests in 2020, acknowledges that “racism is often deeply embedded in our societies’ history, intertwined with its cultural roots and norms” (European Commission, 2020, p.13).

The United Nations report on the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism (United Nations et al., 2023) puts particular emphasis on the economic impact of colonialism, whereas it can be argued that its effect on the Europe-

an cultural sector is also flagrant. Culture was employed as an instrument of power on local populations during colonialism. Where colonial empires tried to extinguish local traditions and languages, they imposed their proper cultural customs on them. These historical roots explain why cultural productions that emerge from BIPoC communities oftentimes lack consideration in Western societies.

Colonialism's Legacy is Still Luring on Today's Cultural Sector

European societies are becoming increasingly diverse, which implies that the idea of one hegemonic and homogeneous form of 'national culture', is progressively being challenged. In any case, it can be argued that the notion of a homogenous national culture overlooks countries' territorial and regional diversity and is hence an unrealistic concept even before considering impacts of migration.

In his text ***I**mmigration et pensée d'État* (1999), Abdelmalek Sayad adopts Pierre Bourdieu's concept of state thinking (*Pensée d'État*), according to which the state apprehends the world through various categories. These categories can be of economic, social, cultural or ethical nature and are determined by the mental structures of the nation. The latter function as a foundation for a national community. These structures are both influenced by past events and determine how the members of a state's community will apprehend the world and future events. In this regard the mental structures of some EU member states are influenced by their imperial past and sometimes neo-colonial present, which impact BIPoC communities and their ability to freely express themselves artistically. The EU Anti-Racism Plan acknowledges this:

> **Cultural and creative industries face similar challenges such as under representation [of BIPoC communities] among filmmakers, or stereotypes in other cultural output. At the same time, those industries can be powerful vehicles for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.**
> (European Commission, 2020, p.14)

Sourisseau and Offroy remark that inegalitarian systems prevent all groups of society from expressing their cultural identity equally. In their work ***Cultural rights: a paradigm shift*** *(Les droits culturels, un changement de paradigme)* (2022), the authors argue that in the backdrop of globalisation, which facilitates the circulation of cultural goods, not all cultures have equal influence on each other. The authors cite Western colonialism and its outcomes as sources of these inequalities and speak of 'relationships of cultural domination' that work intersectionally and intertwine, compensate, combine, or accumulate in consonance with one's social background, ethnic origin, age, gender, language, or religion. They pinpoint this phenomenon to the social and historical construction of our references and identities, that are infused by institutionalised norms. They refer to the same process as Sayad, outlining how our thinking is embedded in social norms. This means that the colonial past, as well as the hierarchisation of other social markers such as age or religion, results in certain individuals being valued more than others in the public realm. This inevitably leads to problems of representation in the creative industries.

Cultural Rights - A Paradigm Shift ?

The Fribourg Declaration recognises the universal right to participate in cultural life, and to live and express one's cultural references. Cultural rights are inscribed to the human rights' legal framework, and are partly enshrined in several fundamental treaties, such as the universal declaration of human rights. In this sense, the Fribourg Declaration was a paradigm change in cultural policy at international but also national level and impacted EU cultural policy. The declaration of Fribourg addresses:

Article 3 - The right to cultural identity
Article 4 - The right to refer to a cultural community
Article 5 - The right to access and participate in cultural life
Article 6 - The right to education
Article 7 - The right to information
Article 8 - The right to participate in cultural cooperation

The declaration comprehends culture as the:

> **Values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, traditions, institutions and ways of life through which a person or a group express their humanity and meaning they give to their existence and their development.**
> (Fribourg Declaration, n.d., p. 5)

A cultural identity is the range of cultural influences through which an individual, alone or within a community, defines their identity, expresses themselves, and seeks recognition of their dignity. A cultural community refers to a group of people who share a common cultural identity that they seek to preserve and develop. The Fribourg Declaration makes these two elements fundamental rights, and states that everyone is free to choose their cultural identity, as well as the cultural community to which they wish to adhere. The idea of one hegemonic culture is discarded and the equality of all forms of cultural expression inscribed in the law. Moreover, it affirms that all cultural identities must be respected, for together they form the diversity of humanities' cultural heritage. Diverse societies need to accord space and respect to every cultural identity and community.

However, the question how to implement these universal rights remains. As noted, the European Union acknowledges the under representation of minorities in the cultural sector, and a framework such as the Fribourg Declaration, is a crucial tool to create a referential. But concrete strategies for its application and hence materialisation remain to be established. While the EU recognises cultural rights and integrates them into various policy areas, it faces significant challenges due to the fragmented nature of its cultural competence, leaving much of the implementation to individual member states. Indeed, cultural rights are inscribed into the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[3], expressly in article 22 and 25. Nonetheless, the latter only applies "to the EU institutions and to Member States when they act within the scope of the EU law (art.51)" (ENNHRI, 2019b, p.3). Here, the EU's limited competence in the cultural sector restrains its scope of action to implement cultural rights. This issue is recurrent when it comes to the Fribourg Declaration, which is non-binding in nature as it is not a treaty that can formally be ratified by states. The challenge is comparable at the level of the United Nations, which promotes cultural rights through international treaties, but has a narrow to insufficient ability to legally enforce them.

Cultural rights that reflect an approach of cultural pluralism can thus be read as a paradigm change that informed the EU's approach to culture. This paradigm shift is significant since it opposes the obsolete vision of homogenous and linear cultural expression and is resolutely open and protective of minorities and their cultural expression.

How to Move Forward — Diversity vs. Representation

On Representation

Stuart Hall's work "Representation – Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" (1997), bases on the assumption that culture entails the production and exchange of meaning in a society. This meaning organises our living-together and the accepted norms in society. According to Hall, the way we represent things reflects the meanings we accord to them. In turn they need to be interpreted meaningfully by others. In the chapter "The Spectacle of the Other," the author develops the history of popular racialised representations in Europe that started being produced during colonialism. These representations reflected racialised discourses that are structured by binary opposites such as 'civilised versus savage' or 'culture versus nature'. Over time, these representations transformed into stereotypes, that according to Hall "tend to occur where there are gross inequalities of power" (p.259). Stereotypes are characterised by their essentialising, reductionist, and naturalising nature while symbolically fixing boundaries that maintain the order that designates *The Other*[4].

Black Artist Database co-founder Kay Ferdinand describes that many black artists still struggle with othering: "there is an expectation that they will perform in line with the stereotypes historically associated with black people"[5]. This hinders them from being seen as individual artists, creatives, and storytellers. Representations, quite obviously, are a matter of equality as well as power relations. According to Hall "A discourse produces, through different practices of representation (scholarship, exhibition, literature, painting), a form of racialised knowledge of The Other (Orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of power" (p.260). He even goes as far as to argue that:

> **The major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.** (p.261)

According to him, European culture is profoundly marked by the idea of its own superiority over other cultures, which has influenced former colonial powers to create stereotyped representations of others, justifying the superiority of Europe at the hand of these representations. This still impacts the European cultural sector today, as it inherits from colonial mental structures.

The unreserved expression of one's own identity through creative means continues to be a privilege stemming from a position of power that is often not granted to racialised artists. Moreover, representation should not only be applied to artistic processes, but more globally to the expression of ideas. In a Eurocentric framework, many ideas and issues are viewed narrowly, often marginalising diverse perspectives and reinforcing stereotypes. Hence, to effectively represent a topic, it is crucial to embrace multiple viewpoints, especially those from marginalised communities. This inclusive approach not only enriches our understanding but also challenges dominant narratives, illuminating often overlooked complexities. Moreover, representation can serve as a platform for dialogue, allowing artists and thinkers to amplify alternative narratives. By doing so, Eurocentric paradigms can be disrupted, fostering a more equitable discourse that reflects the true diversity of experiences.

Stuart Hall argues that it is important for BIPoC communities to determine their own representations, since this disrupts power relations and can have a significant positive impact on their emancipation in predominantly white societies. In the way our cultural representations are currently managed, this implies that racialised people are part of cultural structures and participate not only as actors in films or musicians on stage, but also take their place at strategic points in the cultural sector, such as in event programming or curation.

This is not to say that there is no space in which racialised communities can express themselves freely. Often, authentic representation takes place in grassroots, community spaces that do pioneering work in developing strategies that differ from what is possible in traditionally structured institutions. Some go as far as arguing that genuine representation is only possible in self-organised spaces as they have the possibility to question and challenge every little detail, which is not possible in institutions[6]. However, we want to explore the possibility to apply these strategies to the cultural sector more broadly, including institutionalised spaces.

Racialised people's self-representation can be linked both to Brooks (2012) and to cultural rights. Through the question of who represents whom, we negotiate the way we live together in societies that are subject to a growing diversity. By taking Hall's analysis as a starting point, we also avoid looking for a purely 'visual' representation, as the author asserts that representations carry meaning and are highly symbolic.

On Diversity

Nonetheless, a remaining question is how to create mixed spaces in which BIPoCs are taken seriously as stakeholders and can express their true opinion. A common approach when aiming to create mixed cultural environments, including BIPoCs and white people, is 'diversity'. Be it governments, the European Union, companies in the private sector, or structures in the cultural world, when it comes to establishing a strategy to integrate racialised people into projects, diversity is mentioned rather abruptly, often coupled with the call for more inclusivity. In this sense, the European Union, for example, speaks of a diversity and inclusion strategy for the cultural sector.

Some scholars have taken an analytical distance from the concept. In her book *On Being Included – Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012), Sara Ahmed critically explores diversity policies. She acknowledges that diversity is seemingly omnipresent as "we are told that diversity is good for us. It makes for an enriched multicultural society" (p.51). In this way, diversity might seem like a promising strategy for the implementation of theoretical frameworks such as cultural rights, in which everyone has the right and the space to express themselves without stereotypical representations.

Ahmed (2012) explains that diversity has two semantic dimensions: it can be employed as an adjective while it also bears a normative meaning. As an adjective it is a way to describe an organisation and its qualities. In its normative dimension, it is the expression of priorities and inherently positive values. Ultimately, both are linked as the adjective becomes normative: when someone uses the term diversity as an adjective, it involves the normative judgment that

diversity is positive. ‘Diversity’ even has an aesthetic dimension, given the many images that are purposefully created to evoke the term and its normative dimension. A typical example for this is picturing smiling faces of different skin colors on a university or company brochure. In this context the ‘Benetton Model’ is often referenced, referring to the advertisement campaigns[7] of the fast fashion company The United Colors of Benetton.

Indeed, the term can be used to rebrand organisations. Nirmal Puwar (2004) argues that diversity has come “overwhelmingly to mean the inclusion of people who look different” (p.1), and Ahmed (2012) affirms that “if diversity becomes something that is added to organisations, like color, then it confirms the whiteness of what is already in place.” (p.33). She argues that diversity often unveils ‘institutional whiteness’, implying that institutions are shaped by histories of whiteness that have a profound influence on their current identity. Here, we can weave the thread to Sayad’s concept of mental structures, which are fundamental to white institutions.

Lars Ebert spoke about his last job as director of a cultural institution in the Netherlands and explained that it was quite clear which Dutch cultural institutions were predominantly ‘white’ and which were ‘BIPoC’. He described that the audiences did not mix easily. While it was possible to have people of color in leadership positions, that does not suffice to make an institution truly diverse. The psychological barriers and issues of identification remain challenging because there is a lack of tangible representation in the activities, the atmosphere, and the overall visitor experience. He argued that for true diversity to exist, it is essential that people see themselves reflected not just in leadership but in every aspect of the institution.

In this context, diversity is sometimes adopted to ‘mask’ institutional whiteness and to create institutional images that are produced for external entities. We can call this principle ‘performative diversity’. Grassroots organisations that advocate for more representation of BIPoCs in the cultural world have also tied ‘diversity’ to white institutions[8], stating that it is not a relevant concept to their work. In the context of Berlin’s cultural scene, it has even been described as a ‘trend’[9]:

> **They invite some BIPoC writers or artists who are supposed to do their thing in these completely white rooms in front of a completely white audience. This is then seen as the accomplishment of the “diversity mission”. […] They are invited for a short time, and then the institutions can point to them for three months and say: ‘look we invited this person’, but the structures remain completely white.**

Diversity seems far more important to white institutions than to racialised communities, who are themselves among the focus of the concept. However, a certain mistrust towards the authenticity of these approaches can be perceived.

Generally, Ahmed (2012) remarks that the term diversity has replaced terms such as ‘social justice’ or ‘equality’, and thus lost the connection to struggles against systematic inequalities. Along the same lines, in the *Decolonializing Europe Booklet* (Faye-Rexhepi et.al., 2023), Max Arto de Ploeg cites Angela Davis on the matter:

> **It seems that the term diversity has colonized all of our struggles for social justice. When you only do the visible dimension of diversity you might end up with a group that is more conservative than the white people you try to diversify. Until we combine diversity with social justice, we only end up with diversity that makes no difference at all.** (p.10)

Diversity vs. Representation

Diversity in the cultural sector also has been examined with a less critical lens, suggesting that effective diversity in cultural institutions needs to go beyond its visible form of individuals’ skin

color. Yingling (2020) argues that a meaningful approach to diversity must be linked to cultural diversity, as defined in the Fribourg Declaration allowing all individuals to thrive in their cultural community. In her text she analyses how white institutions can create mixed spaces via a meaningful approach to diversity.

She distinguishes between diverse environments and diverse ideas, pointing out that it can be unethical to invite or hire people solely based on their physical appearance. If an institution realises that its ideas are not diverse enough, she suggests identifying who is missing from the ideation process. Instead of engaging in ‘community outreach’, as this can be reminiscent of the ‘rescue syndrome’, she proposes that white institutions should present themselves as an equal partner to the communities they want to engage with.

For the author, diversity and inclusion are inherently linked. Inclusion occurs when “the relationship between two classes is such that all members of one are also members of the other” (p.49). This is exemplified in the collaboration between white institutions and institutions representing a marginalised community. According to the author, white organisations have the tendency to consider their individual costs and the benefits that can be derived from a collaboration, without considering the costs to the community with which they are partnering. In the worst case, the partnership becomes a point in a grant application or advertisement, which would be performative diversity.

Felix Meister is active on a youth advisory board of an established museum in Berlin, that can be considered as white institution[10]. He describes this structure as “very unique”; it was founded by women of color who mobilised their communities to join the group. This makes the board very diverse, representing people of color, as well as a younger generation that is usually not considered in museums’ decision-making processes. Felix describes it as “kind of a small self-organisation within the museum because we’re not constantly mentored”[11]. This shows how important it is for white institutions to establish a climate of trust and respect towards the organisations with which they collaborate, so that the latter feel like they are accepted as an integral part, rather than visitors.

Diversity and Representation are two radically different approaches. Representation emphasises the self-determination of racialised people, and is consequently embedded in anti-colonial thinking. According to Hall, it is a medium to break away from the power structures inherited from colonialism. Diversity, as theorised by Ahmed (2012) on the other hand emerged out of white institutions, which sometimes simply aim to conceal their whiteness as ‘it is the right thing to do’, since diversity is seen as inherently positive. However, despite these criticisms, for representation to take place, it is necessary for cultural structures to engage in a process of transformation, since today they are predominantly white. This is where Yingling’s (2020) strategy to create meaningful collaborations with community partners to create sustainable diversity in a structure, can be helpful.

WHAT PLACE DO BIPOC COMMUNITIES HOLD IN THE EU's CULTURAL POLICY ?

A Brief Introduction to the European Union's Cultural Policy and its Current Political and Strategic Framework

The Roots and Theoretical Construction of the EU Cultural Policy

As mentioned in the introduction, culture holds a particular position in European policy. Sassatelli (2007) explains that one of national cultural policies' "aims is the fostering of specific identities and thus the formatting of fully socialised, compliant citizens, sharing common tastes and conduct" (p. 29). As the European Union does not have a clear historically rooted identity, nor the competence and/or the will to replace a national identity, the implementation of a European cultural policy necessitated a distinct frame. Culture as a European policy domain needed to be conceptualised in a manner that does not take away from the national identities, to prevent giving the impression to impose a new—European—identity.

In their work *EU Cultural Policy: Europe from Above* Lähdesmäki et. al. (2021) point out that in the 1970's, European discussions on culture were especially centered on the applicability of European economic standards to the cultural sector (Sassatelli, 2007). However, the Union's competences for culture were not yet well defined and delimited. During the 1980s, the cultural sector as a sector of European public policy began to take shape, with the set-up of a council of ministers of culture, first resolutions, and the first grants that were awarded. This operated without culture being enshrined in a treaty, until the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, in which one article was devoted to culture (Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU). From then on, European cultural policy truly took shape, with first structured funding programmes such as Kaleidoscope, Raphael, and Ariane.

Sassatelli (2007) explains that the objectives of European cultural policy were to protect and foster the European cultural identity, which in turn provided legitimacy for the European integration process. Lähdesmäki et.al. (2021) acknowledge an 'identity-building agenda' in the EU's cultural policy:

> **While the rhetoric and objectives of this identity-building agenda have transformed over the decades, its core focus has been on creating belonging so that the citizens of member states would perceive the EU as a cultural and social entity close to them and their concerns, rather than a distant economic and intergovernmental organisation.** (p.49)

In this sense, the accent is not only put on European identity but also on the underlining of cultural diversity, and in turn intercultural dialogue. The cultural policy discourse oscillates between the emphasis on cultural unity and the

acknowledgement of the Union's diversity. The two seemingly opposite concepts form the core devise of the EU: 'United in Diversity'.

In the 2007 *'European Agenda for Culture in the Globalizing World'* the Commission "described Europe as diverse in term of history, languages, and culture, and at the same time united through shared values and principles" (Lähdesmäki et.al., 2021, p.50). Contrary to national cultural identities, the European cultural identity is built on a variety of cultures. The central idea of EU cultural policy is thus to transmit the idea that this supra-national structure is meaningful as it represents a diversity that remains united by the values that all its members carry. Here, contrary to Ahmed's (2012) conception of diversity, the term stands for cultural influences, life realities that are shaped by different histories. While minority protection is mentioned in the European context, it does not form the core of the concept.

Lähdesmäki et.al. (2021) identify the 'Participatory Agenda' as another central strategy to the EU's cultural policy. This implies that next to identity building, the involvement of actors at various levels in making, supporting and implementing the policy is incremental to EU cultural policy. Next to participation on a governmental level, it is also conceptualised as audience development, referring to the consumption of cultural goods or the reception of cultural services to the greatest possible extent. According to the authors, this is closely linked to the identity building strategy. Participation requires and at the same time fosters identity and the sense of belonging to a European cultural entity. Through the enlargement of EU financed culture's audiences, more people create a sense of belonging and recognise an entity that goes beyond just economic agreements. The idea is that via the participation of actors on various levels, and especially local actors who implement EU cultural policy, the European identity feels for the cultural consumer coming naturally 'from below'.

This mechanism can still be seen today in European cultural policy especially with regards to the enlargement of the EU. The Union has invested 85 million € in 230 different cultural projects throughout the Western Balkans between 2014 and 2020. The countries in which the recipient projects are implemented all have Stabilisation and Association Agreements[12] with the EU, that are established with the horizon of an eventual EU membership. This shows how culture is considered as a first step to create a sense of belonging between future partners. In this context the EU's cultural policy has also been described as a foreign policy tool (Schug, 2024).

The EU Cultural Policy's Current Political and Strategic Framework

The Cultural and Creative sectors in the EU participate in the implementation of the major political directions of the European Commission[13]. In the period from 2024 - 2029 the Commission formulates three strategic priorities:

> **I. A Free and Democratic Europe:** Upholding EU values internally and globally.
>
> **II. A Strong and Secure Europe:** Strengthening security, defense, and migration management, while preparing for a larger Union.
>
> **III. A Prosperous and Competitive Europe:** Enhancing competitiveness, supporting green and digital transitions, and fostering innovation.
> (European Union Priorities 2024-2029, s. d.)

Next to the support of the Commissions' key goals, two strategic papers have been published that define the goals of the European cultural policy. The ***New European Agenda for Culture***[14] was published in 2018, following up on the 2007 ***European Agenda for Culture***[15]. This document formulates the framework for cultural cooperation at the EU level, and sets out three strategic areas:

Social

Aimed at harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being, the agenda seeks to:

> · Foster the cultural capability of all Europeans by making available a wide range of cultural activities and providing opportunities to participate actively
>
> · Encourage the mobility of professionals in the cultural and creative sectors and remove obstacles to their mobility
>
> · Protect and promote Europe's cultural heritage as a shared resource, to raise awareness of our common history and values and reinforce a sense of common European identity

Economic

With the goal of supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, for jobs and growth, the objectives of the agenda are to:

> · Promote the arts, culture and creative thinking in formal and non-formal education and training at all levels and in lifelong learning
>
> · Foster favorable ecosystems for cultural and creative industries, promoting access to finance, innovation capacity, fair remuneration of authors and creators and cross-sectoral cooperation
>
> · Promote the skills needed by cultural and creative sectors, including digital, entrepreneurial, traditional, and specialised skills

External

The goal is to strengthen the EU's international cultural relations through three objectives:

> · Support culture as an engine for sustainable social and economic development
>
> · Promote culture and intercultural dialogue for peaceful inter-community relations
>
> · Reinforce cooperation on cultural heritage (*Strategic Framework for the EU's Cultural Policy*, n.d.)

The social objectives of the New European Agenda for Culture mention cultural diversity, which we have already identified as a possible leverage to enable authentic representations of BIPoC communities.

Furthermore, the ***EU Work Plan for Culture 2023 - 2026***[16] is "established as a strategic and dynamic instrument of EU cultural cooperation that addresses current political developments and sets priorities, with due regards for the EU principles of subsidiarity[17] and proportionality[18]" (*Strategic Framework for the EU's Cultural Policy*, n.d.). Its main priorities are the following:

> **I. Artists and cultural professionals:** Empowering the cultural and creative sectors
>
> **II. Culture for the people:** Enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society
>
> **III. Culture for the planet:** Unleashing the power of culture
>
> **IV. Culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations**
> (*Strategic Framework for the EU's Cultural Policy*, n.d.).

21 actions are defined under these priorities. The paper defines working methods to implement the goals, as well as target outputs and a timeline that is to be respected to achieve the measures. The first and second priority are the most relevant for the current work. The repre-

sentation of BIPoC people in the cultural sector is both a question of representation among cultural professionals, as well as of the audiences' consumptions of cultural content.

The second priority concerning 'culture for the people' echoes an independent study that was commissioned by and authored for the European Commission in 2023. The report ***Culture and Democracy: the evidence***[19] finds clear correlations between citizen's participation in cultural activities and indicators of civic engagement. It explains:

> **Cultural engagement can play a key role in strategies for the inclusion of communities at risk of exclusion. Cultural participation can combat social alienation and segregation. Cultural activities empower individuals and communities by creating spaces and opportunities to express their personal and group identities and perspectives as a valued part of a broader and diverse cultural and social landscape that can reinforce belonging.**
> (European Commission, 2023, p.30)

The potential of the cultural sector to be a driving force for tolerance in the face of otherness is well identified by the European Commission. The expectations even go beyond rendering the cultural sector more divers but are tied to the will to create belonging. This in turn is linked to the identity-building agenda that reinforces validation for EU integration.

Creative Europe Networks: Liaising Between Cultural Stakeholders and the European Commission

Missions and Organisation of Creative Europe Networks

One of the main instruments of the implementation of the EU cultural policy objectives is the Creative Europe programme[20]. Established for the first time from 2014 to 2020, the budget of its second round, from 2021 to 2027 has increased by 50%. Compared to other EU-funded programmes such as Erasmus+ or Horizon, the Creative Europe budget remains rather small[21].It aims to allow sectors to explore and experiment with new practices and working methods on a European scale, while developing collaborative practices among European peers[22]. The 2021-2027 programme focuses on ecological, digital, and inclusive transitions, but over the past four years, significant adaptations have emerged. One of the main issues that has been introduced into this funding framework is the support of the Ukrainian cultural sector since the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022.

Creative Europe networks operate in the context of this grant programme and hold a particular position, between training institution and policy advisor. Scioldo (2024) points out that European cultural networks emerged in the 1980's in a rather unstructured, self-organised manner. They were institutionalised during the 1990's resulting from a negotiation phase with the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, and Audiovisual Media (DGX), that was responsible for culture at the time.
Ever since networks:

> **have increasingly been funded by the EU's cultural programmes, i.e. Kaleidoscope, Culture 2000 and, most recently, Creative Europe, thus becoming fundamental mechanisms within the EU's cultural governance and implementation of policy.** (p.2)

The author links the genesis and institutionalisation of transnational networks to the EU's 'soft policy' style, that emerges in policy areas where the EU lacks legitimacy and must submit to the principle of subsidiarity. The open method of coordination[23] or structured dialogue between the EU and civil society are other tools of the EU's soft policy style. One might argue that the 'soft policy style' makes part of Lähdesmäki et.al. (2021) 'participatory agenda' of the EU's cultural policy.

According to Scioldo (2024), the "main objective [of Creative Europe funded networks] continues to be the creation of a common vocabulary (i.e. knowledge base) and cognitive framework for use in describing the challenges [faced by the cultural sector]." (p.5). Indeed, these processes are non-coercive and help to ensure the dissemination of information, as well as topics being

interpreted in the same way by different actors. In theory, this makes the networks an excellent position to look for strategies to enhance BIPoC representation in Europe's cultural sector.

With regards to the current strategic framework of EU cultural policy, networks support the dissemination of objectives cited above, such as the green transition of the cultural sector, the implementation of juster working rights in the cultural sector and others. Creative Europe networks can be considered as a 'bridge' between the European cultural sector and the European Commission. Professionals working in Creative Europe networks have described their role as 'translators', with the task of decoding the political language spoken by the European institutions for the cultural sector one represents, while translating the needs of the sector into the political language of Brussels[24].

The networks' aims[25] are to strengthen the cultural sector, to offer spaces for the exchange of ideas and best practices, as well as to provide professional training opportunities. Their three main activities are networking, advocacy, and capacity building. In all those missions, there are two visible directions: a bottom-up and a top-down dynamic. For example, regarding training opportunities both dynamics are observable. The network is expected to consult their members to propose training opportunities that match their needs, while considering the Commission's strategic orientations. The latter will feed into the training offer that networks develop for their members, making topics such as green transitioning recurrent. The training opportunities can take various forms such as webinars, written resources, or workshops. Networking opportunities on the other hand exist to enhance European collaboration. This can be tied to the 'identity-building-agenda', as exchanging with peers who are active in the same sector on the other corner of the continent can increase the sense of belonging and form a 'European' vision of things. Advocacy, in turn, can be tied to the bottom-up dynamic. Through their exchange with the members and documentation efforts, the networks are specialists of a field of cultural activity and can bring things to the attention of the Commission.

Regarding the application process to be granted funding for Creative Europe networks, there is an open call which is published for a four-year period. The last one closed in March 2024. Unlike other Creative Europe funding calls, only one organisation applies alone. This organisation will receive the grant and is allowed to award money to third parties. Applicants must propose concrete activities linked to the missions of the networks, such as capacity-building, networking, or others. The latter are to be formulated in the form of work packages that correspond to the main orientations of European cultural policy.

In terms of governance, network's members often have considerable authority. In many cases, an executive committee is made up of members, who have substantial decision-making power. In addition, most networks hold a general meeting once a year, at which strategic decisions for the coming year are discussed and voted on. However, the Commission does not impose any governance model, which results in each network having their specific governance structure. Moreover, it is up to the networks to define what their entrance criteria are, which is heavily dependent on the sector they aim to represent. The Reset! network, for example, accepts three categories of members: independent cultural and media actors, resource structures, and local public institutions. Resource structures can be the ***L'Observatoire des politiques culturelles***[26], for example. The municipality of Lyon is a member of the network, proposing to experiment with the proposals formulated by independent actors on their territory. These two groups however do not have a voting right. As mentioned, the admission criteria and governance structures are highly dependent on the network itself.

How Can Creative Europe Networks Enhance the Representation of BIPoC Communities?

Concerning the representation of BIPoC communities in the European strategic framework, there are several points that Creative Europe networks can refer to. The New European Agenda for Culture as well as the EU Work Plan for Culture call to guarantee the accessibility of cultural activities and to provide opportunities for large-scale participation. Networks could outline that to ensure real accessibility of European culture, the issue of representation needs to be addressed. While active participation by citizens is encouraged, there remain marginalised groups, who are often excluded from full engagement in European cultural spaces. Prioritising BIPoC representation offers the potential to attract and engage a broader audience that has historically been underrepresented in these cultural domains. Improving BIPoC representation would not only draw in a broader audience that has been less engaged, but also strengthen the EU's identity-building efforts by making its cultural policy genuinely reflective of its citizens. Moreover, by prioritising the representation and participation of marginalised groups such as BIPoC communities, cultural activities can challenge social alienation, as the report ***Culture and Democracy: The Evidence*** suggests. This not only strengthens personal and collective identities, but also reinforces a sense of belonging within a diverse European society. In this way, cultural participation helps the EU achieve its goal of being perceived as a cultural entity close to the concerns of all its citizens, rather than a distant, impersonal institution.

Nonetheless, given that BIPoC communities are not specifically mentioned in the EU's cultural policy, the emphasis on inclusivity and diversity might be too vague to drive meaningful change. While the EU promotes cultural diversity under the broad framework of "United in Diversity," the absence of explicit references to BIPoC groups might be limiting the capacity of these policies to create effective, top-down pressure on cultural institutions and networks. It remains crucial to understand what conceptualisation of diversity is put forward, and how it is implemented by cultural structures. The second part of this work will also examine if the networks experience any unified form of bottom-up pressure from their members to lead actions concerning the representation of BIPoC communities.

REIMAGINING BIPOC REPRESENTATION: CREATIVE EUROPE NETWORKS AS SPACES OF EXPERIMENTATION

The Consideration of BIPoC Representation Among Creative Europe Networks

Given that an inclusive transition is a transversal category in the network grant application, most networks have identified the issues of diversity and inclusion and are taking actions of various nature on it. This does not imply that they take concrete actions on the representation of BIPoC communities, since we will understand that the conceptualisation of diversity and inclusion varies among the networks. Nonetheless, there are some networks that have not addressed diversity and inclusion at all. As analysed, white institutions must undergo a process of transformation to allow (auto)representation of BIPoCs. Hence, we will examine how far these diversity and inclusion strategies may be a stepping stone to enable representation. During this analysis we keep the risk of performative diversity in mind and will carefully examine how the strategies operate.

To proceed with the analysis, we distinguish between networks that integrate diversity into their core values and those that do not. The latter are shared publicly and constitute the spirit of the network to the outside. Networks who have a dedicated strategy to diversity and apply it to their work also count to the first group. The second group consists of networks that have dedicated resources to the issue of minorities, without yet engaging in a more in-depth process. The difference here lies between resources such as conferences or podcasts and internal strategies or working groups dedicated to diversity and inclusion, as they show varying levels of commitment. This categorisation does not make implications about the nature and quality of the approach that is employed to diversity.

Networks That Have Identified Diversity as an Issue, Integrated It in Their Work Without a Specific Mention of BIPoC Representation

Some networks have dedicated working groups for diversity and inclusion, indicating a profound engagement with the issue of minorities in the cultural sector. The *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musiques et Musikhochschulen* (AEC) represents higher music education in Europe and declares to operate inclusively. In the framework of the 'AEC – Empowering Artists as Makers in Society'[27], the Working Group 'Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality (DIGE)' has been established. This work "explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and socio-economic backgrounds" *(WP8. Fostering Diversity, Inclusion And Gender Equality*, n.d.). While ethnicity is mentioned, there are no specific actions that address people of color in the cultural sector[28].

ECSA, the 'European Composer & Songwriter Alliance' defends and promotes the rights of music authors and advocates for better social, economic and commercial conditions for

composers and songwriters in Europe and internationally. Like AEC, they have established a working group on diversity and inclusion. The group has started out with a dedicated focus on gender balance and has since "evolved to address issues of diversity, harmful stereotypes, and equity altogether, always including but not limited to gender issues" (ECSA, n.d.). However, their definition of 'diversity' is not the easiest to grasp, and their focus seemingly remains on gender balance. This is visible through their activities that consist in the participation in programmes such as 'Keychange'[29] or their resources on 'Gender equality, diversity and inclusion best practices', that include only resources on gender equality[30].

The 'European Music Managers Alliance' (EMMA) has incorporated the promotion of equality and diversity as their fourth advocacy concern. Nevertheless, their advocacy statement does not propose a clear definition of 'diversity'. One understands that it entails individuals 'from diverse backgrounds', which remains an imprecise definition as it can be argued that all individuals have different backgrounds. The tendency of cultural organisations to use the term 'diversity' rather broadly, without a clear stance on what it entails has been identified by sector professionals, who have linked it to the rather left leaning, progressive nature of the cultural sector[31]. The cultural sector is based on the idea that it is inherently open-minded and naturally embraces diversity. Yet, as the term is so broad, it needs to be clearly defined and delimited so that it can be a guide to concrete and relevant actions. This recalls Ahmed's analysis of the potential performative character of the term diversity in white institutions.

From a positive point of view, the term allows to include people who are victims of several forms of discrimination in one approach. Although this work focuses on racialised communities, many other types of oppression exist, which is important to recognise to create an equal and ethical environment in cultural institutions. But the question remains: to what extent is grouping all types of discrimination under the umbrella of 'the promotion of diversity' an effective way of finding targeted strategies to better welcome each community, while respecting their specific needs and histories of exclusion?

IETM goes more into detail on what is meant by 'diversity' in their IDEA strategy (IETM's vision for Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility). The international network for contemporary performing arts:

> **Reach[es] out to performing arts professionals from all backgrounds (ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, physical abilities, social conditions, languages, working and employment status, age, career path and geographical location) [and does] this by mainstreaming principles of inclusion, diversity, equality and accessibility across all [their] activities, with an intersectional approach.** (IETM's IDEA Strategy, n.d.)

The mention of intersectionality is interesting. The concept that was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1990's[32] addresses the entanglement of multiple oppressions that shape and constrain the lives of marginalised groups. Intersectionality challenges the idea that oppression can be understood through any single lens by showing the interconnected dimension of our identities that are composed, among others, of our race, class, sexuality, age, gender, and physical ability. This network considers diversity, inclusion, and equality as means to identify and combat discriminations of all types, while acknowledging their interwovenness.

Trans Europe Halles, a network representing European third spaces, has initiated 'The Cultural Transformation Movement Project' (CTM), that is "committing to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and access in arts and cultural organisations" (*The Cultural Transformation Movement and Project - Trans Europe Halles,* n.d.). While the exact definition of diversity remains vague, the project has recently published an artistic

statement that addresses some of the structural problems marginalised groups face in the European cultural sphere. The text reflects on the challenges that artists face while being neurodiverse, coming from rural areas, being queer, mixed-race, disabled, or from underrepresented communities. They argue that the cultural sector is affected by Eurocentric, patriarchal, and colonial structures and hence create racist, sexist, ableist, and classist working environments. The project is rooted in intersectional thinking and acknowledges the under-representation of people of color in post/neo-colonial societies. Their understanding is in line with Hall's (1997) argument that today's cultural sector and the representations it permits are influenced by histories of (colonial) oppression that create stereotyped representations of racialised communities.

Among the networks with dedicated working groups, advocacy axes, strategic plans, or projects related to diversity and inclusion, the definition of these concepts remains ambiguous. It can range from a focus on gender inequalities to intersectional approaches. Some approaches are determined to enhance the representation of marginalised groups in the cultural sector, proving that representation is well identified by some cultural actors. Nonetheless, the definition of diversity remains broad, and sometimes blurry, it ranges from projects mainly dedicated to gender equality, to others who openly criticise under-representation of BIPoC communities and link it to colonial legacy.

Networks That Have Identified Diversity as an Issue and Propose Resources on the Subject

Next to the networks that have rooted strategies on diversity and inclusion, there are others who propose dedicated resources on it. Hence, they have considered the place of minorities in the European cultural sector, but have not yet included this reflection in the core of their functioning.

ENCATC is a network promoting the fields of cultural management and cultural policy, education and research. As they have strong ties with the research and education sector, they publish their own scientific journal entitled *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy*. In it, they have published several scientific articles dealing with diversity in the cultural sector. Whereas most articles take diversity as a prerequisite for cultural diversity, as defined by the Fribourg Declaration, the different publications concentrate on distinct groups that they link to diversity. One article focuses on socio-economic factors, whereas the other focuses on histories of migration. Their understanding of diversity as ultimately cultural diversity is shared by Yingling's (2020), who was published in this journal.

Europa Nostra, which specialises in the heritage sector, organised a Masterclass on diversity and inclusion in the heritage sector in 2023, which took place in Timișoara, Romania. The detailed report[33] addresses the integration of diversity and inclusion in the European cultural heritage sector, emphasising the need for cultural heritage to represent Europe's diverse populations, while finding strategies to make the heritage sector a means for social cohesion. They mainly focus on ethnic minorities (Romani), women, the queer community, and youth.

The European Network of Museum Organisations provided a webinar dedicated on "Rethinking Museum Accessibility Strategies", which reflects on the visible and invisible barriers that one can encounter when visiting a museum. Some obstacles might be motor or visual barriers, income or time constraint. When defining diversity, it is stated that "each of us is a universe [constructed by] different characteristics that coexist and change over time: each one of them can be the object of a mismatch and therefore discrimination. Several issues together can cause a mismatch even deeper: that's about intersectionality" (Ciaccheri, n.d., p. 14). As some of the projects shared above, the webinar links diversity closely to intersectionality, but without tying it to systemic issues such as colonial past or patriarchal structures.

Reset!, the network for independent cultural and media structures, published the *Atlas of Independent Culture and Media* in April-May 2024. The work is divided in two parts, one gathering eight topic-based volumes on the basis of 64 workshops that have been held over the last two years all over Europe. The second part consists of five policy recommendations based on the documentation of part one. The sixth volume of part one is entitled *Cultivating and Safeguarding Inclusive Cultural Havens: Diversify, Embrace, and Heighten Awareness*. The description of this issue criticises the structures imposed by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy and expresses the necessity to use culture as means of resistance for marginalised groups. It calls to recognise one's privileges and to stand against discrimination. The approach seems similar to Trans Europe Halles who situate the roots of discrimination in the past and thus identify its traces in current systems. Therefore, they identify the roots for under representation as Hall (1997) does, who sees them in the system we inherited from colonialism.

During one of Reset!'s workshops, a definition of diversity was proposed: "diversity is a voice that does stand out from the usual, from what is recognised as standard and common knowledge" ("Cultivating and Safeguarding Inclusive Cultural Havens: Diversify, Embrace, and Heighten Awareness," n.d., p.45). This also ties in with Hall's work, which highlights the fact that European knowledge was for a long time the only one of any significant value. Here, diversity means representing other perspectives within a canon of knowledge that is influenced exclusively by voices with a Eurocentric perspective. One article is dedicated to antiracist approaches in independent structures that aim to support and represent the African diaspora in Portugal, which highlights the recognition of racialised people as a marginalised group in the cultural sector.

The European Festivals Association (EFA) is the organisation that initiated 'The Festival Academy'. The Festival Academy proposes training in the field of festival management for young professionals. Topics such as inequality, racism, and decolonisation are addressed multiple times in this training[34]. The subjects are recurring and are not tied to the concept of 'diversity', which is unusual given that all other networks tie questions of inequalities to diversity. Indeed, the keynote of US based artist Hank Willis Thomas directly addresses the impact of racism, inequality, and decolonisation on his artwork.

Which Theoretical Framework to Enable a Better Representation of BIPoC Communities?

As mentioned, the networks rarely address the representation of BIPoC communities directly. One of the reasons might be that it can be considered unethical to focus on one marginalised group only. It is important to examine which approach for integrating minorities into the network's activities would be most effective in addressing the underrepresentation of BIPOC individuals. Despite their important differences, most networks evoke diversity, which demonstrates the conceptual versatility of the term, while confirming its positive normative dimension as outlined by Ahmed (2012). For a lack of more precise terms the use of 'diversity' allows the networks to communicate that they are aware of injustices and work towards a positive change within this framework. Nonetheless, we were able to identify that diversity is inherently geographically and culturally located, as who is minorised depends on the historical construction of a society. The networks represent very different artforms, from heritage to the independent scene, hence the structures of the sector they defend most probably also influence their vision on diversity. Nonetheless, some patterns in the framing of diversity among the different networks remain.

One recurrent way to conceptualise diversity was 'diversity with a particular focus on gender equality', that describes groups who hold gender equality as their core mission, but 'explore' other forms of discrimination. This also echoes the EU's conceptualisation of equality and inclusion as cross-cutting issue in the 2024 network call. In this, the Commission calls to provide opportunities for all disadvantaged groups, but to pay special attention to gender equality and gender mainstreaming ("***Call for Proposals EUROPEAN NETWORKS OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS***," 2023, p.7). The question remains if this framework can prove efficient to enhance the representation of BIPoC communities. The emphasis on gender equality is certainly paramount, but without an intersectional approach, the life realities of BIPoC communities in the European cultural sector have very little or close to no space in this approach.

Next to the gender-focused approach, some networks have established an intersectional understanding of diversity, acknowledging all forms of discrimination simultaneously and taking their interwoven nature into account. As this accords all forms of oppression equal importance, this approach bears the potential to be a successful strategy to enhance the representation of BIPoCs.

The last pattern is the systemic or structural approach to inequalities. It recognises that the cultural sector, as any other professional sector, is influenced by unequal histories of power that lead to marginalisation in the contemporary work environment. This is an important prerequisite to enable BIPoC representation. To enhance the representation of BIPoC communities, a mix between an intersectional and a structural understanding of diversity is necessary. Intersectionality is not only a question of an ethical approach to diversity, but also allows us to understand the life-experiences of BIPoC communities more in depth, as they are not only people of color but also gender minorities, religious minorities, refugees, and so on. On the other hand, for intersectionality to be operational, it needs to be informed by a deep understanding of where discriminations come from and how they are historically rooted.

Responding To the Challenge: Emerging Strategies

Knowledge Production

Many networks produce resources to engage with the question of representation and underrepresented communities, as the provision of resources and the training of their members is among their core missions. These resources can take several forms:

Toolkits: These productions encourage readers to give attention to the subject and propose concrete actions they can apply in their work. One example is the 'Diversity Roadmap'[35] that was developed by the Swiss organisation Helvetiarockt, that addresses the underrepresentation of gender minorities, and other feminist organisations. The Roadmap was translated and disseminated at a European level by Live DMA, a Creative Europe network. A similar tool is Yourope's 'Diversity and Inclusion Toolset'[36]. The latter provides guides, tests, checklists, interviews, reports, games, action plans, and many more. This is worth noting because it triggers different manners of engagement, ranging from a playful exploration to more factual texts. The Toolset dedicates three segments to three different forms of anti-discrimination: inclusion and accessibility, anti-racism work, and gender and sexual equality, while acknowledging the intersectionality of oppressions. This approach allows us to understand various forms of oppression separately, while keeping in mind their intersections.

Training: Reset! also provides different resources for their members, as for example their 'toolbox' format. It consists of two-hour sessions, moderated by a sector professional who trains the participants on an issue that is significant to their work. Before the online session, a survey is sent out to participants so that the toolbox is as relevant as possible. The team is currently working to provide a toolbox on the question of diversity, in cooperation with an organisation that is active in the field. A comparable format might be the webinar on 'Rethinking Museum Accessibility Strategies', by the Network of European Museum Associations (NEMO) that was already presented above. These resources have the advantage of offering an additional level of engagement to written resources. However, this can also be a hindrance for cultural professionals who must manage to fit these training courses in their already tight schedules.

Conferences and Roundtable Discussions: Another key resource for the dissemination of knowledge are conferences, round-table discussions, workshops, and keynotes. NEMO proposed several conferences at their 'European Museum Conference' about marginalised groups in Europe's Museum sector. The European Festival Association proposed the 'Atelier for Solidarity keynote: Hank Willis Thomas', in the context of their training instrument 'The Festival Academy'. The keynote is dedicated to themes

such as racism, decolonisation, and inequality especially within his work as an artist. Conferences and round table discussions are certainly important elements in the joint reflection on the subject. They might be the occasion to collectively define the matter or to put it on the agenda of professionals who have not yet had the topic in their vision.

Resource production is one of the first strategies or methodologies to be put in place to improve the place of racialised people and other minorities in the European cultural sector. Resources are a suitable way to put the topic on the agenda of other stakeholders. However, the approach has its limits. While it is necessary to raise awareness, the resources do not imply concrete actions. In addition, reception cannot be measured or verified, so they need to be accompanied by more concrete measures. This is a good example of the European cultural policy style, that has little scope for tangible action, but is based on the creation of shared references and the exchange of best practices.

Diversification of the Coordination Team

A concrete measure can be the diversification of the coordination team. This is the instance on which a network can have the easiest influence, as other decisional bodies are often elected by the members. The presence of people from marginalised groups can allow for a better understanding of their perspectives within organisations. To implement this, some networks note in their job offers that with equivalent qualifications, a person with a diverse background will get the job, actively adapting the management structures[37]. Nonetheless, Yingling (2020) points out that "increased diversity without increased inclusion leads to tokenisation" (p.50). We continue to focus on white institutions and must consider the barriers that may exist for minorised people and BIPoCs to circulate within them. Felix Meister pointed at the risk of hyper adaptation that people of color need to engage in to be able to exist in a white institution:

> **Because it is often those who make an extreme adjustment and ultimately adopt white thinking who then make it to the top. It just does not mean anything because the structures are still white.**[38]

This resonates with the citation of Angela Davis, stating that "when you only do the visible dimension of diversity you might end up with a group that is more conservative than the white people you're trying to diversify" (Faye-Rexhepi et.al., 2023, p.10).

Yingling acknowledges that the historical marginalisation of minorities has led to a lack of individuals who fit the requirements necessary to access leadership positions in the cultural sector. Combined with Felix's perspective on the hyper assimilation of racialised people in white structures, the author's call to reconsider the required qualifications of leaders seems important. Moreover, when a person with a minority background joins a team, it is important not to ask them to speak on behalf of their entire communities. The targeted recruitment of people of color may represent a suitable strategy, but needs to be implemented in a thoughtful way.

Diversification of Membership

Sophie Dowden acknowledged that networks "are membership-based, meaning power is somewhat decentralised, with decision-making involving both the team and the board or members"[39]. This implies that the diversification of the membership can trigger a bottom-up process. With increased representation in the membership, there would be a corresponding increase in representation within the decision-making bodies, since decision-making power is widely distributed. But how can this process of diversification be successfully implemented?

Lars Ebert assumes that it must be accompanied by a structural change in the network. He believes it is not efficient to wait for new members from marginalised communities to join the network, and at best apply for a position on the

executive board. He states that under current conditions this would be “like smuggling them in”. This also implies the necessity of a cultural change that needs to take place in a white institution, so that it becomes a space in which minorities feel comfortable and at their place. Culture Action Europe integrated the diversification of their membership into their latest grant application, which was validated this summer. This allows them to have a dedicated budget to work on a strategy that defines structural changes necessary in their membership strategy and overall organisation. The goal is to launch membership recruitment actions, to diversify the membership and from there on diversifying the governance level.

Sophie Dowden pointed out that the pre-requirements to join networks can be quite high for organisations that might not have attained a certain degree of structuration yet. She acknowledges a correlation between art form and degree of BIPoC representation, as some art-forms operate in rather elitist ways. Historically well-structured genres such as choral music are supported by established organisations, such as the European choral association, whereas the rap or hip-hop scene do not have a specific network representation, even though they are very widely consumed. The fact that some genres are more embedded in well-defined organisational structures than others, makes it easier for some to form networks. One of Sophie Dowden’s suggestions for improving representation within the membership was to modify the entry requirements for joining networks.

Creating Encounters and Discussions with Communities

Sophie Dowden proposes to create encounters between networks and communities as a way of getting to know each other and gaining mutual trust. She asked, quite rightly, at how many occasions these different communities gather in the same spaces, around a table, to get to know each other and exchange about subjects that are of equal importance to both groups. This could perfectly integrate into the missions of the Creative Europe networks, falling under the networking category. The crux of the idea is to find other ways of connecting, possibly by getting together around advocacy issues, or simply inviting communities to one’s events. This is a way of getting to know each other and building trust before asking to become a member of an organisation with which they have no connection.

Exchanging with minority groups around a communal topic can create what Yingling (2020) calls cultural awareness. The exchange will help identify the stakes involved for another community when it comes to a certain subject. In a reflexive approach, this can be an opportunity to become aware of one’s own position and to recontextualise one’s needs and priorities (cultural self-awareness), as well as to get to know those of another community (cultural awareness for the others). These steps might prove crucial to dismantle institutional whiteness, which is a prerequisite to engage in other measures proposed above.

Working Groups and Dedicated Projects

As it became visible in the section above, numerous networks create working groups for ‘diversity and inclusion’ or invent dedicated projects similar to the Cultural Transformation Movement operated by Trans Europe Halles. Sophie Dowden who coordinates several working groups on diversity for Creative Europe networks, recognises the immense variety in their functioning and composition. The working groups’ compositions span from internal ones, only accessible for the coordination team and board members, to others that are accessible for everybody within the network. As mentioned, the definitions of diversity are as numerous as the working groups themselves, stretching from gender-based models to a focus on intersectionality. Indeed, some include a focus on the representation of BIPoC communities, but by far not all working groups do.

To sum up, a working group is often established when a large-scale issue is identified that requires reflection and expertise, as well as a certain positioning within the network. It is therefore created and sometimes equipped with financial resources, to find concrete strategies. The subjects that are addressed are often complex and do not fit into the day-to-day work of the coordination team. The Trans Europe Halles Cultural Transformation Movement project is an initiative of the Working Group with the same title. Their approach is two-dimensional, locally implementing workshops, artistic residencies, and mentoring programmes, while simultaneously collaborating on a transnational level. This allows the partners to have a concrete impact while exchanging and trying to ameliorate strategies and actions.
Hence, its actual impact is highly contingent upon how diversity is conceptualised within the working group. If diversity is interpreted broadly, without a specific focus, it risks diluting efforts to address systemic inequities. On the other hand, if the instrument explicitly prioritises the representation and inclusion of BIPoC communities, it can become a targeted and powerful tool for dismantling structural barriers. Therefore, its effectiveness in promoting genuine diversity depends heavily on the degree to which it is dedicated to BIPoC representation.

What Approach Allows for Representation?

We have identified the various approaches and methods that exist in relation to ‘diversity’ and classified the approaches that are best placed to enable the representation of racialised people in the cultural sector. First, diversity is still sometimes used as a ‘catch-all’ concept, with no real strategy behind it. However, an intersectional approach to diversity that understands the historical roots of discrimination and how they inform our contemporary societies, can be a framework for better representation in the long-term.
In terms of methods, the production of resources is an inherent part of Creative Europe networks’ missions. In this case, it allows to negotiate and finally establish a common framework on diversity and can be a powerful tool for agenda-setting among the networks’ audience. Nonetheless, sector specialists and literature suggest the necessity for structural approaches for the creation of sustainable representation. These imply a critical examination of one’s proper structures to recognise the historical context of which one inherits and the effects this has on one’s work, the composition of one’s team, and membership. Precisely, networks need to understand that they are ‘white institutions’ and find ways to disrupt this. This needs to be accompanied by a profound engagement with communities, leading to understanding their perspective and stakes. Once a network has resituated their perspective, it can take concrete actions to enhance representation among the team and so on. This will allow networks to gain the perspective of BIPoC communities, which will add important perspectives to their work.

WHAT DO NETWORKS REQUIRE FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE STRATEGIES ?

When Do Networks Face Challenges in the Implementation?

Lack of BIPoC Representation Awareness Within the European Commission

Among the sector specialists, the missing awareness of the under-representation of BIPoC communities in the European Commission has been pointed out as a major challenge. As mentioned, the network's main mission is to bridge the gap between the cultural sector they represent and the policy makers at the European level. In this sense they are subject to both, bottom-up and top-down pressure. We have also already established that most networks are white institutions, and have yet to enhance representation in their membership through dedicated measures, which explains the little bottom-up pressure. On the other hand, the conceptualisation of 'diversity' among the European Commission seems to prevent any genuine top-down pressure.

During a conversation with a Commission official, this broad definition of 'diversity' was indisputable: while the concept was mentioned as a central objective of the EU's cultural policy, it was developed as linguistic, cultural, and narrative diversity. Gender equality was also repeatedly mentioned. Diversity was furthermore tied to the geographic and thus cultural diversity that the Creative Europe programme covers. When asked about the role of BIPoC communities in this definition of diversity, they emphasised the need to be cautious when applying the concept to specific groups, as it may lead to being "stuck in categories." They also noted that addressing the underrepresentation of racialised communities can be achieved by including ultra-marine, ultra-peripheral, and rural territories in the process. While the network's definitions on diversity were broad, the Commission's definition seems even broader. It includes not only a focus on marginalised groups, who are already multifold, but on whole industries and territories. Sector specialists explain that the Commission can tend to be "out of touch with reality"[40], and draw the relevance of their calls from their political constituency, which is diluted through many filters (Commission, Agencies, Directorates).

While this is understandable in so far as the EU's cultural policy is a pivotal tool in the support of overall goals of the Commission such as the implementation of a strategy for the digital sector or the enlargement of the EU, it makes it seemingly impossible to create a dedicated space to work on the reinforcement of BIPoC representation in the EU's cultural sector. It indeed seems like anything other than a priority for the Commission, to the point that the urgency for advocacy campaigns on the matter becomes clear. Nonetheless, this broad narrative of diversity appears to conflict with the more specific interpretation derived from the policy framework, particularly the EU Action Plan Against Racism. The definition of the Commission seemingly os-

cillates between a very large reading, and the application of diversity to specific fields.

European Reading of Diversity and Its Link to the Colonial Past

Laurent Bigarella analyses this lack of emphasis on racial diversity in relation to a broader European colonial legacy, that according to him remains a “touchy topic” for many. Academic literature has acknowledged that the EU’s memory politics are curiously selective, putting an important focus on commemorating events like the Holocaust and Stalinism, while largely ignoring Europe’s colonial past. Sierp (2020) argues that this “imperial amnesia” stems from reluctance to confront the legacy of colonialism and its modern implications. According to the author, this is partly due to the EU’s limited competences to develop unique memory politics, resulting in a strategy of “redirection”. Indeed, the EU needs to establish its memory politics in the framework of national remembrance cultures, which is why the overwhelming accent is put on the ‘the victims of authoritarian regimes’. The latter is a frame that allows to include histories of national socialism, as well as of Stalinism into one remembrance culture, and was established after the enlargement towards the east in 2004. Nonetheless, the author argues that substantially all member states have a history with colonialism, be in the role of the colonial power or themselves under imperial domination.

The EU’s 2020-2025 Anti-Racism Plan states that contemporary racism in Europe is firmly rooted in some member countries’ colonial past. In its implementation, however, the cultural sector received less support than expected. The report on its implementation stated solely that the realisation was carried out across Creative Europe’s criterion of ‘inclusivity’. Overall, we can say that unlike gender issues, or to some extent disability issues, the representation of BIPoC communities is not an integral concern of the EU’s public policy and overall strategic framework. The issue swings between recognition and a discrepancy in its application, due to the lack of a dedicated strategy and limited institutional competence. While policymakers acknowledge its importance, this does not translate into effective action, as efforts remain fragmented and inconsistent.

Different Histories and Socio-Political Contexts Within the Membership

We have largely established that the under-representation of BIPoC communities is an outcome of Europe’s colonial past. Except that Europe’s colonial past has taken many different forms across the continent. Sophie Dowden, who has worked with several EU funded networks, has experienced cases in which the membership lacked understanding when the wish for more BIPoC representation was expressed. One needs to bear in mind the multiplicity of histories that exist in the European Union, as well as the fact that different countries have joined the Union at different historical periods.

When speaking about marginalised groups in the European cultural sector, Laurent Bigarella identified the under-representation of Eastern European communities among Western European festival lineups and discourse programmes. When the EU was enlarged towards the east in 2004, this was celebrated and comforted the Union’s narrative as a world power upholding civilisational values. Nonetheless it also “entailed Central European submission to symbolic, material, and formal inequalities within the EU” (*Submission, Resistance, and Emancipation? Two Decades of the EU’s Eastern Periphery. | Heinrich Böll Stiftung | Prague Office - Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary,* 2024). These factors coupled with the historical othering of Eastern European by Western Europeans are certainly key to the under-representation of Eastern European artists.

Additionally, Eastern Europe has a radically different historical relationship to colonialism than Western Europe does, as described by Warsza and Sowa (2022), who describe the Eastern European colonial experience as dual, since East-

ern Europe was both colonised and engaged in colonial-like practices. It has been subject to ‘internal colonialism’ called serfdom until the 19th century[41]. Poland expanded into modern-day Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania during the early modern period, and after achieving independence in the 20th century some countries aimed to participate in the colonial race. At the same time, one needs to remember the complex histories involving regional minorities, such as the Romani and Jewish communities, while also recognising that the region endured imperial domination by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Today, the region continues to face a looming imperial threat due to Russia’s aggressive expansion policies.

This demonstrates the necessity to reassess our understanding and historicisation of colonialism, to make it a framework that comprises diverse European experiences and not merely Western European ones. It underlines the importance of adopting an intersectional approach that enlightens all types of discrimination practices that are present in the European cultural sphere.

Working Conditions

It seems that working conditions are at the very core of the limited implementation of strategies to strengthen the representation of BIPoCs in the cultural sector. When adapting a structural approach to a problem that engages with colonial legacy and its deep influences on the identity of most networks, it implies considerable time and effort. The engagement with communities, the creation of a relationship dominated by trust and mutual understanding also takes time. Sophie Dowden ironically declared working conditions and mental health in the cultural sector as “her favorite topic” during our conversation. But it undoubtedly appears to be one of the key factors that determine the success or failure of representation strategies. Sophie Dowden described that most Creative Europe funded networks operate with very small teams, ranging from four team members for the very modest ones to 15 for the ‘large teams’. Moreover the work of many professionals in the cultural sector is branded by multitasking and the accumulation of responsibilities. This adds to the feeling of burnout and exhaustion experienced by many in the sector. Furthermore, the cultural and non-for-profit sector of which the networks are a part of, are known to pay rather little salaries[42].

Laurent Bigarella draws a connection between the precarious nature of the work in the European cultural sector and the under representation of BIPoC communities within it. He outlined a hypothesis suggesting that many individuals working or studying in this field often have access to some form of pre-existing support structures, potentially from more financially privileged backgrounds. This comfort enables them to pursue careers in the cultural sector, despite the inherent risks of unstable income, freelance work, or temporary contracts. Additionally, the cultural sector typically requires a university-level education and is highly competitive, making entry even more difficult. Another barrier is the overwhelmingly white nature of the sector, which creates its own set of challenges. This dominance shapes unwritten cultural codes around behaviour, language, and appearance, such as ways of speaking, dressing, and networking, that people of color may not necessarily share or feel comfortable navigating.

The challenging working conditions in the European cultural sector create a dual barrier to progress. First, they limit the ability of those employed in the sector to engage deeply with issues of representation and inclusion, as overwork and financial instability leave limited room for meaningful advocacy. Second, the precarious conditions discourage people of color from entering the sector altogether, as the risks and barriers are too great for many with a reduced economic safety net. Together, these factors perpetuate the lack of diversity within the cultural sector, reinforcing existing inequalities and limiting the potential for meaningful change.

What Measures Are Needed to Implement These Strategies?

Clearly Define What One Is Talking About

To improve the representation of BIPoC communities, many networks implement diversity strategies. However, it is necessary to clearly define and frame diversity within an organisation if that is the chosen approach. Here we recommend that networks aiming to strengthen BIPoC representation via diversity strategies adopt an intersectional and historically anchored approach, supported by the identified theoretical framework.

Diversity strategies that address various forms of oppression, and acknowledge their intersections enable us to understand these issues both individually and in relation to one another. This framework highlights the importance of BIPoC representation while connecting it to other forms of oppression. Adopting a historically rooted perspective helps to understand the deep connections between BIPoC communities and issues such as colonial history, the functioning of Western institutions, and the characterisation of Creative Europe networks as predominantly white institutions. Recognising these connections is essential to start the process of dismantling the dominance of whiteness within these institutions.

I. Start out with a structured learning process, focusing on different forms of oppression and their historical roots. Participants should explore various forms of oppressions, such as racism, disability discrimination, and LGBTQIA+ phobia, examining how these issues are deeply embedded in societal structures like patriarchy, capitalism, and neo-colonialism.

II. Next, participants would reflect on how these oppressive structures impact their own networks and daily work. This involves identifying and listing the consequences that arise from these influences.

III. Finally, it will be essential to set clear goals for what the participants aim to achieve through this process. By doing so, one can work towards meaningful change and greater equity within their communities.

This process should be led by a professional specialised in diversity training, who has the necessary knowledge and capacity to navigate such a complicated conversation. Furthermore, it is crucial to communicate and justify the chosen framework for engaging with diversity across the entire organisation. Ideally, everyone—from the coordination team to governance and all members—should be aligned on the definition

of diversity and have the opportunity to express their views on this framing. This collective understanding will significantly ease the implementation of diversity efforts.

Advocacy Campaigns Addressing the Commission's Understanding of Diversity

The EU still seems indecisive about the official vocabulary to use when speaking about diversity. Thus, an amelioration of BIPoC communities' representation that gets implemented via a top-down process seems hard to believe in. Hence, the networks should advocate for the improvement of the Commission's framing of diversity. Of course, the EU does not have the competence to interfere into member states' memory politics, but acknowledging the historical roots of insufficient representation can be an important asset to set it on the agenda in the cultural sectors of Creative Europe benefitting states. Without imposing new memory politics, the discussion of colonial heritage in cultural content can at least trigger a reflection about it.

This campaign can be implemented via various methods by Creative Europe networks. The drafting of statement papers can be one successful way to open the conversation. Another approach can be the organisation of round table debates or conferences that discuss the implementation of a coherent diversity framework that allows for BIPoC communities to be represented in the European cultural sector. This would also tie into the strategy to create informal exchanges with members of the BIPoC community, as they would be obviously important guests around the table.

Advocacy Campaigns Integrating the Question of BIPoC Representation in the Discussion on Working Conditions

We have also identified the inherent link between working conditions in the cultural sector and the under representation of BIPoC communities. The challenge here is twofold. Firstly, the current working conditions in the cultural sector present a real obstacle to a meaningful confrontation with lacking representation of BIPoC communities, as this is a process that demands considerable time and energy. On the other hand, the difficult working conditions in the cultural sector are also an obstacle for people of color to join the sector.

Hence it is important to integrate the representation of BIPoC communities in the current debate on working conditions that takes place in the European cultural sphere. Indeed, on October 23rd, 2023, the European Parliament introduced a draft legislative initiative report focusing on the status of artists and how their working conditions could be strengthened. This report called attention to the professional challenges faced by individuals in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS), emphasising the need for structured support and better working conditions.

Following this, on November 21st, 2023, the European Parliament held a plenary session where it approved the report and issued a formal resolution. The resolution included specific recommendations to the European Commission, advocating for the creation of a comprehensive EU framework that would address the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors. Following our analysis, this EU framework should entail a reflection on the missing representation of BIPoC communities among cultural professionals, thus ensuring that the framework can be a vehicle to realise the idea of diversity in the cultural sector.

Creation of Spaces to Debate on Colonialism from Eastern- and Western European Perspectives

The radically different approaches to colonialism that are prevalent in Eastern and Western Europe, and the link to the varying histories needs to find space for discussion. An approach to diversity that implies to challenge the colonial legacy in today's cultural sector needs a meaningful negotiation of colonial heritage. For it to be productive, networks need to actively invite

Eastern European perspectives around the table. These measures could be implemented via the organisation of round table debates, the production of knowledge such as thematic reports or the organisation of more informal networking sessions. It may also be beneficial to establish regular discussions on this topic within an existing or newly formed working group.

Creation of Encounters with BIPoC Communities

Lastly, the crucial first step for networks will be to provoke exchanges with members of the BIPoC community. As Yingling (2020) stated, when an organisation figures out that their ideas are not diverse enough, it needs to ask itself which perspectives are missing from the ideation process. We have priorly established that the inclusion of BIPoC communities into the work of networks must progress through the phase of 'getting to know each other', to understand each other's perspectives, the stakes that lie in a possible deeper cooperation, as well as to gain mutual trust. This is the prerequisite for Creative Europe networks as white institutions to understand and dismantle their whiteness, and to open up towards new communities.

These exchanges could take place in the context of the different missions that the networks inherit. Concerning advocacy, for example, it might be fruitful to gather around issues that both organisations share. This would facilitate collaboration and allow for both institutions to mutually learn about their priorities. At a European level there are several organisations that could be interested in joining advocacy measures of this kind. ENAR, the European Networks Against Racism is very active in advocating for racial equality. The European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD) regroups civil society organisations across Europe that advocate for human dignity and equal rights for the African diaspora. Another initiative, #DiasporaVote! encourages racialised individuals to become more active in EU policies, for the latter to become more relevant to BIPoC communities.

We have also already outlined conferences or round table debates as opportunities, during which networks can invite members of the BIPoC community to share their perspective. Nonetheless, one needs to keep in mind that it can be critical to make individuals a spokesperson for their whole community. It can be disadvantageous to invite people of color only for conversations that circle around the questions of colonialism, diversity or under representation. Rather, it is important to invite people of color active in the field of culture to all types of discussions.
Maybe the most obvious space within the Creative Europe network's missions in which an informal getting to know each other can take place is networking. Networking can be considered as the way that the coordination team is creating opportunities for members to get to know and exchange with pairs from other European member states. Of course, this implies that the coordination team itself has engaged in some exchanges with members of the BIPoC community before.

All these measures imply that the network has reassembled documentation and identified community structures they wish to exchange with. Being a white institution implies that the networks cooperate for the most part with other white institutions, which requires an active search for structures or cultural actors with whom one wishes to exchange. One needs to keep in mind the different ways to structure one's work that can be prevalent between white and BIPoC institutions, which means the possible necessity to change one's research patterns to try breaking out of pre constructed schemes to find pertinent organisations that will lead to fruitful exchanges and maybe collaborations.

Opening to Other Methodologies and Imaginable Partners

We understand the capacity of networks to be active in two directions: they have an impact on their own institution that they can diversify via revised recruitment processes and a reflection

on the history and functioning of their organisation. The 'outside' structures that networks have an impact on are especially their members, whose work they can influence via the training sessions and editorial productions. Moreover, networks also have an influence on the EU institutions and especially the Commission via their advocacy campaigns.

The primary goal of networks should be to define a concrete framework for diversity. Ideally, this should be a collective process, during which the network proposes a collective definition of diversity. With this framework, the networks could advocate for its implementation at a political level, aiming to create future top-down pressure. This could take the form of a diversity criterion in new calls. A similar process has been integrated into Dutch cultural policy: the 'diversity clause'[43] in cultural funding is a policy designed to promote diversity and inclusivity, particularly regarding race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background. Backed by the Ministry of Culture the respect and implementation of the Code has become a requirement to receive public funding for cultural structures. Consequently, all culturally funded institutions are now integrating diversity and inclusion into their policy frameworks. The implementation of a similar system in Creative Europe calls would be a step towards more representation of BIPoC and other marginalised communities. It also represents a way to concretise change within the EU's cultural policy even though this has rather little wiggle room for concrete policies.

Lars Ebert has also drawn attention to the new chair of the CULT Committee of the European parliament, the German Nela Riehl.
The committee oversees all cultural matters within the Union, such as cultural heritage, diversity, and artistic creation, next to its competences in the educational, media, and youth sector.

While many actors in the European cultural sector were afraid that the position would be granted to a far-right MEP, the election of Riehl, a member of the pro-European party Volt, was generally positively received among sector professionals. Indeed, the Parliament works alongside member states' governments to supervise Union programmes like Erasmus+ or Creative Europe, making the CULT committee a possibly appropriate partner for advocacy efforts towards more diversity within the Creative Europe funding scheme.

One must also keep in mind that Creative Europe is not the only funding programme operated by the European Commission. As Ebert rightly noticed, Creative Europe is only a rather small portion of the public funds that the Commission accords, the other major funding mechanisms are Horizon and Erasmus+, next to other smaller grant types. Horizon Europe is a programme dedicated to the development of research and innovation, with an overall budget of 93.5 billion euros for the period between 2021 and 2027. Erasmus+ supports education, training, youth and sport and has a budget of 26.2 billion euros for the same time frame as Horizon Europe. As a reminder, Creative Europe was granted an overall budget of 2.44 billion euros from 2021-2027. Given the intricate connections among the sectors of research, education, youth, and culture, it is indispensable to foster a dialogue on diversity and inclusion in the funding calls across these various programmes. It would be valuable to explore the extent to which grant recipients of Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe have faced challenges related to the under representation of minorities or the conceptualisation of diversity as outlined by the European Commission. This understanding could inform the development of overarching strategies moving forward.

CONCLUSION

The lack of representation of BIPoC communities in the European realm has received a fresh echo in the light of the nomination of the new Commissioners, who have been presented by the president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on September 17th, 2024. The author of the ***Guardian*** article 'Look at this photo of Ursula von der Leyen's new team – and tell me the EU doesn't have a diversity problem' presumes that to combat "the systemic under representation of racial minorities and structural racism within EU institutions [...] change requires revising staff recruitment policies and eliminating outdated anti-diversity mindsets" (Islam, 2024), asking for policy makers to grant the same attention to BIPoC communities as they are to gender minorities and LGBTQIA+ communities. Indeed, ENAR, the European Network Against Racism has criticised the "compartmentalization of equality policies" (Sanaullah, 2024), referring to the equality portfolio that is accorded to the first Commissioner-designate of color in EU history, the Belgian minister of foreign affairs Hadja Lahbib. While the Commissioner-designate would be responsible for the 'Preparedness and Crisis Management' a rather work-intense portfolio, the equality portfolio (her second portfolio) only shortly addresses anti-racism in connection to hate speech, lacking to address racism's root causes[44].

Concerning the specific representation of BIPoC communities in the EU-funded cultural sector, the mission statement[45] of the Commissioner-designate for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, the Maltin Glenn Micallef, does not address the representation of people of color, nor the implementation of diversity strategies. This development deeply resonates with this work, which has analysed the ambiguous position the European Commission holds when it comes to the representation of people of color, giving it even more relevance.

Indeed, this work aimed to understand if Creative Europe networks can develop and advocate for strategies to increase the representation of BIPoC communities in the European cultural sector. Networks are definitely a relevant site to develop strategies to support the representation of BIPoC communities in the European cultural sector. The networks undeniably face important challenges along the way, such as difficult working conditions and the historical construction of their institution as a white institution, as well as the fragmented European policy context when it comes to the reading of diversity. Nonetheless, their transnational nature and essence as a bridge between actors of different levels, makes them an crucial place for the development of strategies to enhance representation of BIPoC communities as they have an important scope of action.

Indeed, Hall's conceptualisation of representation proves to be an invaluable tool for navigating the numerous diversity strategies that exist. It serves as an anchor, enabling us to consistently return to one fundamental question: "Does this diversity approach allow BIPoC communities to determine their own representations?" ultimately enabling us to evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies. Hall's approach encouraged us to consider the genuine agency of these communities, as well as to prevent stereotyped representations. By focusing on self-determination, we can assess whether these strategies truly empower BIPoC individuals or perpetuate existing power dynamics, engaging in performative diversity. In this way, Hall's framework not only guided our analysis but also encouraged a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in diversity frameworks.

Moreover, we can acknowledge that the *Pensée d'État*—the state thinking we identified in the first part of this work—is rooted in colonial thinking, which continues to heavily influence the representation of BIPoC communities in the cultural sector. This state thinking perpetuates traditional European institutional frameworks, making them 'white institutions'. Together, the concepts of state thinking and white institutions illustrate how past events profoundly shape contemporary societal functioning and highlight the enduring legacies of colonialism in today's cultural landscape. At a European level, the state thinking of various countries comes into play, each with its own distinct history and position within the European Union. This complexity necessitates a discussion of colonial heritage that includes both Eastern and Western representatives.

The non-binding nature of cultural policy, particularly regarding the representation of minorities, has been a recurring theme that challenges this work. This started to be apparent in the Fribourg Declaration, which serves as a well-formulated tool outlining the necessity to enhance representation. Nonetheless, it primarily informs policy makers rather than compels them to act. While we have observed the influence of the Declaration on EU cultural policy, the adoption process remains somewhat clumsy and scattered. Policymakers often mix the declaration with other concepts, which dilutes its effectiveness. This is certainly since they work themselves in institutions shaped by whiteness. Furthermore, the inherently non-coercive nature of cultural policy making at a European level slows the pace of meaningful progress down, making it difficult to achieve the desired outcomes in minority representation.

NOTES

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REFERENCES

Footnotes

[1] BIPoC 22
The acronym “B(I)PoC” is a term that refers to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The term is intended to explicitly make Black and Indigenous identities visible in order to counteract anti-Black racism and the invisibility of Indigenous communities. The term is intended to highlight the specific violence, cultural erasure, and discrimination experienced by Black and Indigenous people. It also highlights the fact that not all People of Color share the same experiences, especially when it comes to systemic oppression, but also aims to unite the aforementioned communities. The term is political because it is self-defining and empowering. The term is used in both activist and scholarly ways.
https://vielfalt.uni-koeln.de/en/anti-discrimination/glossary-discrimination-anti-racism/bipoc

[2] “The concept of racialization refers to the processes by which a group of people is defined by their ‘race.’ Processes of racialization begin by attributing racial meaning to people’s identity and, in particular, as they relate to social structures and institutional systems, such as housing, employment, and education. In societies in which ‘White’ people have economic, political, and social power, processes of racialization have emerged from the creation of a hierarchy in social structures and systems based on ‘race.’ The visible effects of processes of racialization are the racial inequalities embedded within social structures and systems.” https://libguides.uwinnipeg.ca/c.php?g=370387&p=2502732

[3] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

[4] In using this term, the author refers to Edward Said’s work Orientalism (1978), in which Said explains the influence of colonial and imperialist thought on the production of discourse and knowledge about non-Western regions.

[5] Interview with Kay Ferdinand, Co-founder, Black Artist Database

[6] Interview with Felix Meister, freelance pedagogue working in various Berlin cultural institutions

[7] https://world.benetton.com/inside/article_all-the-colors-of-the-world.html

[8] Interview with Kay Ferdinand, Co-founder, Black Artist Database

[9] Interview with Felix Meister, freelance pedagogue working in various Berlin cultural institutions

[10] Felix does not want his employers to be cited explicitly in this work.

[11] Interview with Felix Meister, freelance pedagogue working in various Berlin cultural institutions

[12] “The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) is the European Union’s policy towards the Western Balkans, established with the aim of eventual EU membership. Western Balkan countries are involved in a progressive partnership with a view of stabilizing the region and establishing a free trade area. The SAP sets out common political and economic goals although progress evaluation is based on countries’ own merits” https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/glossary/stabilisation-and-association-process_en

[13] For further information: https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/eu-priorities/european-union-priorities-2024-2029_en

[14] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1527241001038&uri=COM:2018:267:FIN

[15] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1598955769302&uri=CELEX:52007DC0242

[16] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022G1207%2801%29&qid=1671635488811

[17] ”In areas in which the European Union does not have exclusive competence, the principle of subsidiarity, laid down in the Treaty on European Union, defines the circumstances in which it is preferable for action to be taken by the Union, rather than the Member States.”: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity

[18] The principal of proportionality “is closely linked to the principle of subsidiarity, which requires that the EU take action only if it is more effective than action taken at the national, regional or local level. “: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/principle-of-proportionality.html

[19] https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/culture-and-democracy-evidence_enw

[20] For further information: https://www.kreativnievropa.cz/co5fokmmap3aa309/uploads/2021/11/creative-europe-2021-2027-brochure-web.pdf

[21] Interview with Martha Gutiérrez, Responsible of Creative Europe – Culture, Relais Culture Europe

[22] Interview with Martha Gutiérrez, Responsible of Creative Europe – Culture, Relais Culture Europe

[23] Definition of the Open Method of Coordination as employed by the Commission: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/open-method-of-coordination.html

[24] Interview with Lars Ebert, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe

[25] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand/european-networks

[26] L’OPC is a public body dedicated to cultural policy. They train professionals, engage in collaboration with other structures and produce resources. For more information: https://www.observatoire-culture.net/

[27] „AEC – Empowering Artists as Makers in Society” is a new project funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Commission, in support of the European networks, which will run for a period of 3 years starting from February 1st, 2022. The project will build on the results of previous projects carried our by the AEC, in particular the work and outputs of the Creative Europe funded project AEC – Strengthening Music in Society.” https://aec-music.eu/project/empowering-artists-as-makers-in-society/

[28] https://aec-music.eu/project/empowering-artists-as-makers-in-society/meet-the-aec-diversity-inclusion-and-gender-equality-dige-working-group/

[29] Keychange is an initiative, funded by Creative Europe and led by the Hamburg (DE) based Reeperbahn Festival that supports emerging talent and promotes gender balance in the music industry by encouraging organisations to commit to a gender equality pledge. https://www.keychange.eu/about-us/frequently-asked-questions

[30] https://composeralliance.org/media/333-best-practices-gender-and-diversity.pdf

[31] Interview with Laurent Bigarella, Co-coordinator of the Reset! Network and Director of the Ideas Department, Arty Farty

[32] The concept was introduced in her text “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics” (1989) and was reiterated in her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1989)

[33] Find the report here: https://www.europanostra.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-04-Diversity-InclusionMasterclass_report.pdf

[34] https://www.thefestivalacademy.eu/en/media/36-the-role-of-festivals-in-dealing-with-contemporary-issues-gender-based-violence-inequality-racism-social-cohesion-decolonisation-post-conflict-etc./

[35] https://live-dma.eu/the-diversity-roadmap/

[36] https://yourope.org/project/ditoolset/

[37] Interview with Lars Ebert, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe

[38] Interview with Felix Meister, freelance pedagogue working in various Berlin cultural institutions

[39] Interview with Sophie Dowden, Freelance Consultant on Project Management and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/call-for-tender-study-on-discoverability-of-diverse-european-cultural-content-in-the-digital-environment

[40] Interview with Lars Ebert, Secretary General, Culture Action Europe

[41] While Western Europe largely shifted from feudalism to capitalism by the 16th century, Eastern Europe remained locked in serfdom. This system was a form of forced labor that kept peasants subjugated, with noble landlords exercising enormous power.

[42] For further information on the characteristics of cultural employment in the European Union, statistics of cultural employment in the EU in 2023: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_employment#Cultural_employment_.E2.80.93_current_state_and_latest_developments

[43] For further information on the Dutch ‘Diversity Clause’: https://codedi.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Code-Diversity-and-Inclusion-EN.pdf

[44] For more information on the portfolios of Commissioner-designate Hadja Lahbib: https://Commission.europa.eu/document/download/faaf33ff-c8c7-49a1-b01d-56681e11a5e6_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20-%20LAHBIB.pdf

[45] For more information on the portfolio of Commissioner-designate Glenn Micallef: https://Commission.europa.eu/document/download/c8b8682b-ca47-461b-bc95-c98195919eb0_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20-%20MICALLEF.pdf

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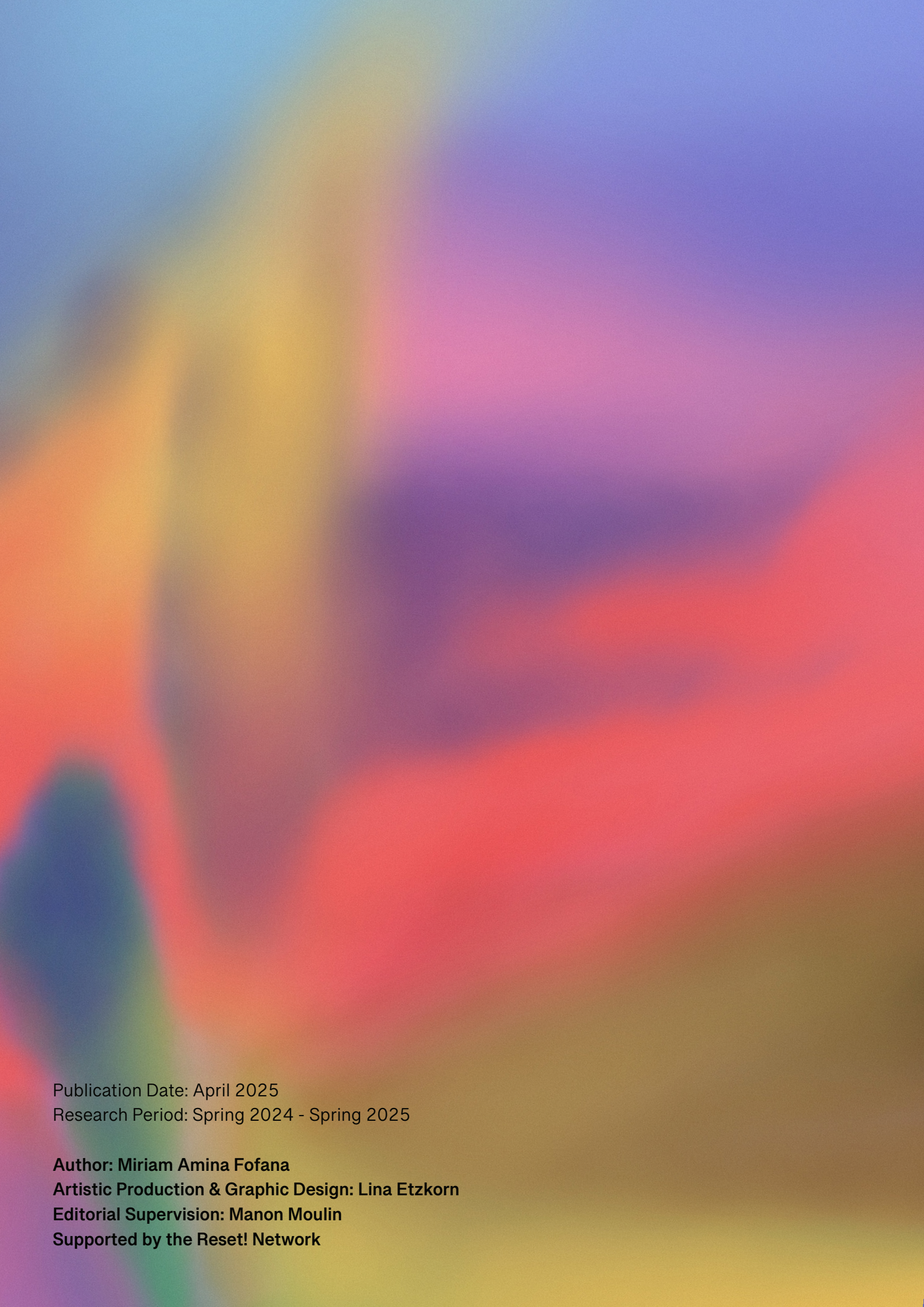

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