



Guide Part II – Rules for Audience Development: Key recommendations

Study on Audience Development - How to place
audiences at the centre of cultural organisations



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Contact: Barbara Gessler

E-mail: EAC-D2-AUDIENCE-DEVELOPMENT-2015@ec.europa.eu

European Commission B-1049 Brussels

Study on Audience Development. How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

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recommendations

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Guide Part II – Study on audience development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

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Experts: a group of additional experts in the field of Audience Development – with various backgrounds and nationalities – participated in the study.

Macarena Cuenca – Institute for Leisure Studies, University of Deusto (Spain)
Marcin Poprawski – AMU Culture Observatory, Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland)
Niels Righolt CKI – The Danish Centre for Arts and Interculture (Denmark)
Antonia Silvaggi – Melting Pro (Italy)
Iker Tolosa, Donostia – San Sebastian 2016 (Spain)
Anne Torreggiani & Jonathan Goodacre – The Audience Agency (UK)
Dea Vidovic, Kultura nova Foundation (Croatia)

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ADESTE
Be SpecACTIVE!
CORNERS
Donostia/San Sebastian 2016
ENCACT
IETM
Matera 2019
River//Cities

Many thanks to all the Organisations which applied to the open call and to those who have dedicated time for interviews

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1. RATIONALE AND INTRODUCTION

This section intends to provide a series of implementable policy recommendations targeting decision makers at the local, regional, national and EU levels. We have also included recommendations targeting cultural organizations, citizens' initiatives and artists themselves.

We have understood Audience Development as a complex system, with policymakers and practitioners sharing responsibility. Just as audiences are multiple and diverse, the people responsible for meeting their cultural needs have different competences.

As Dragan Klaić, the late cultural policy expert, once wrote: "*Art can be international but audiences are always local*". By this he meant that regardless of the artists' backgrounds, the mixture of expression and tradition, the geographical mobility of the artworks or the languages used - the audience member is always in a local context.

We especially value all policy initiatives that create conditions for meaningful encounters between arts and citizens, at the grassroots level, in a live setting.

Audience Development policies should be implemented taking into consideration the parallel levels of political influence: European, national, regional and local. Our study also concludes that empowering organizations with capacity building programs focused on audience relations is equally important. Cultural operators, neighbourhoods, educational institutions - all have shown themselves to be worthy targets of policy initiatives.

Although the analysed case studies have sometimes taken advantage of public policies and schemes, most of them didn't face the AD challenge in the framework of specific programmes, but rather responded to a need, more or less felt and formalised at the policy level. For this reason not all the 8 recommendations are followed by concrete examples of specific schemes and programmes ("others did") that created the right conditions or fostered innovation. Nevertheless all case studies indirectly gave useful clues about the enabling conditions that actually made AD possible.

The final section of this document provides suggestions to contribute to refining definitions and award criteria for evaluating projects within the framework of the Creative Europe Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. *Raise awareness about Audience Development, as a concept and a strategy, among the different cultural stakeholders*

Audience Development remains a foggy concept. Interpretation varies significantly from a sectoral, geographical and institutional point of view.

For some European countries (like UK and in the Nordic region) the audience development discourse is alive among professionals. For other countries, the notion remains unknown, both on the political agenda and in daily practice.

Moreover the range of interpretation is heavily polarized. On the one side, AD is a synonym for marketing. On the other, AD is a progressive agenda, paying only attention to marginal and hard-to-reach audiences, non-attenders. **Cultural operators** need to understand that AD is a long-term process embracing the entire organization. Reinforcing cultural participation is not a simple matter of making culture accessible or cultural organizations economically sustainable. Concrete practice shows links between cultural participation and crucial dimensions of our lives. Citizenship, health, well-being and innovative competence - all are affected by collective and creative encounters.

Awareness needs to be raised also among **policy makers** and **public officers** at all levels. They need to make their expectations clear regarding public investment in culture. In the great majority of cases we studied, cultural professionals were frustrated by a lack of clarity from decision- and policymakers. Investment was made but expected impacts were fuzzy. A clear agreement between culture funders and culture makers that the focus should be on the **audience** would facilitate the work and change the landscape quickly.

Implementation possibilities:

- Set up a **European Agency on Audience Development** in order to provide information and opportunities, raise awareness among the key stakeholders, organize dedicated events, stimulate peer-to-peer environments, showcase good practices and reinforce links with the training sector
- Provide continuity to the **Engageaudiences.eu** web-site, transforming it into a permanent platform for gathering resources, relevant practices and key information.
- Organize gatherings and dedicated workshops for cultural operators, policy makers and public officers, possibly in association with the Creative Europe Desks.
- Create digital tutorials/content, to be disseminated through major cultural networks

Others did:

- In the UK an Arts Council national scheme to develop theatre audiences aged 26 and under ('A Night Less Ordinary') was the starting point for the York Royal Theatre to develop TakeOver Festival. The Theatre saw the opportunity as being much greater than simply providing free tickets; it was a way for younger people to be invited into the building and to be able to put their mark on it. More in general, the high number of UK submissions to the call and the average high quality of proposals seem quite coherent with the structured and long lasting commitment of the Arts Council to raising awareness on AD as a national priority.

Target groups: European, national and local public servants, policy makers and politicians. Cultural operators and associations. Media/journalists/communicators.

2.2. Implement an evidence-based approach for measuring advancements in the area of Audience Development

Evidence-based policy is fundamental from a medium-long term perspective, both for policy makers and practitioners. Indicators and measurement data become truly useful when expected outcomes are defined explicitly and transparently.

Many Creative Europe projects and most nationally, regionally and locally supported initiatives indicate AD as a priority. But no specific indicators and assessment methods are required to evaluate to what degree these objectives have been effectively pursued. It is therefore vital to analyze the systemic impact of AD approaches, based on participation indicators.

Tools need to be developed, indicators need to be defined and expectations need to be clarified.

Implementation examples:

- Set up a European Observatory on Audience Development (possibly linked to the European Agency on Audience Development; see Recommendation 1) to assess results stemming from different EU funded cultural initiatives, to conduct research and to test indicators and innovative approaches
- Stimulate EU funded projects to provide sound evaluation data to measure AD objectives and make comparison between the projects' possible impacts
- Stimulate research, at both European and national levels, to identify indicators able to go beyond traditional data, to assess participation and the impacts, and to test qualitative outcomes and sustainability.
- Empower the work of appropriate Open Method of Coordination groups, creating further links to Member States and even cities, about the importance of good practice for monitoring and evaluation.

Others did:

- **CORNERS**, a Creative Europe funded project, embedded evaluation into artistic activities at events throughout Europe during 2015-2017. A questionnaire/"passport" was given to audience members, who carried it with them and responded to during their visits to various activities. The data were then collected and are now being analysed, thanks to a cooperation with Donostia/San Sebastian European Capital of Culture 2016 and the University in Bilbao. Such attempts could be shared and developed.

- Where existing, like in Denmark, Netherlands and UK, cultural organisations that we studied extensively used national knowledge frameworks (like for example Audience Finder in UK and Cultural Compass in DK) and tools for targeting and empowering their AD strategies.

Target groups: Policy makers and public servants at all governmental levels: European, national, regional and local. Universities and research institutes. Larger cultural institutions. Trans-national cultural projects (especially CE-funded ones).

2.3. Reinforce links with the Educational Sector, promoting integration between the cultural sector and the educational system

Arts Education is a key pre-condition for audience development and sustainability. Cultural experiences during the school life are vital for inspiring creative and cultural capital. This means nurturing the capacity for creative expression, in a range of media and through a set of integrated actions. Cultural organizations and the educational systems must cooperate actively to make cultural experiences accessible and to integrate these skills into primary and secondary education.

Cultural organisations can make a proactive contribution to arts education, working closely with schools, approaching young visitors, getting them involved. Collaboration is possible in both curricular and extra-curricular activities, the local authorities and the schooling system have to be more exploited. School premises can be developed for artistic activities or cultural initiatives targeted to the pupils, their families and the local community.

Implementation examples:

- At national and local levels, clear requirements should be formulated to direct cultural institutions as well as schools towards the improvement of arts education provision and a more fruitful co-operation. At the same time the reward of good practices can stimulate actors in the field to overcome existing obstacles.
- In many countries, a stronger inter-institutional collaboration (particularly between ministers of culture and education) should be developed
- Stimulate good practices, their exchange and ad hoc longitudinal studies to assess impacts and results
- Reinforce the degree of professionalism of the cultural sector through the development of cooperation between universities, schools and training centers and a stronger coordination among training systems and international and national professional networks

Others did:

- Organisations such as Cirkus Cirkör (SE), Kindovar (SI) Künstlerhaus (AT) and many others work extensively and in a structured way with schools and the larger educational system, hence empowering competences and mutual understanding among the educational and cultural professionals involved.

Target groups: Policy makers at the national and local levels. Education professionals (including teachers, professional organizations and leaders). Artists and arts organizations.

2.4. Build capacity for Audience Development and Engagement strategies, in cultural institutions and among arts professionals. Training. Practice

The adoption of an audience-centric approach and the need to identify sustainable models requires appropriate resources. For many organisations, real change management is needed to reshape the way they develop audience strategies and the staff must be equipped with appropriate skills to design and implement audience development activities. Some competences are particularly lacking: data analysis, marketing, participatory encounters, mediation, digital and social media management, evaluation and monitoring.

These emerging training needs are often difficult to meet. The European formal education system is not yet prepared to enable future professionals to tackle audience development effectively.

European funded projects and networks can be good platforms for sharing experiences and common problems as well as for empowering staff.

Recent European Capitals of Culture are especially good learning examples of long-term cultural investment, dedicated to capacity building of the different actors involved: institutions, professionals, artists, civil servants. *E.g: **Wroclaw 2016, Matera 2019, Rijeka 2020, Timisoara 2021.***

Implementation examples:

- Strengthen opportunities, in the framework of the main EU programs related to culture, education, research and training (Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020), for cultural organisations to share experiences and solutions in the area of AD. Concrete initiatives to enhance specific competences and skills at a European level are needed.
- A European Agency on Audience Development (see recommendation 1) might also stimulate peer-to-peer environments, showcase good practices, reinforce the links with the education and training sectors - from a transnational perspective. For the moment, "European" often means a coalition of "national" interests. A broader and international approach might stimulate a better use of public funding for culture.
- Stimulate cultural institutions and professionals to look for benchmark models "outside" the frame of "traditional" cultural sectors and instead stimulate cross-fertilisation, intersectoral cooperation.

Others did:

- The Auditorium de Tenerife (ES) and CAOS-Indisciplinate (IT) took advantage of the training provided in the framework of the EU funded project ADESTE. The Leonardo da Vinci programme Development of Innovation provided the essential framework for testing new competences and training methodologies that would have been difficult to develop individually by single cultural organisations. Kilowatt

Festival and York Theatre Royal took, instead, advantage of the training and of the exchange moments provided by the Creative Europe project Be SpecActive!.

- During the study, we encountered a number of “*audience resource centers*”, sometimes coalitions of engaged cultural associations, who shared practice and platforms. Although this was not a primary aim of our study, and not visible in the Case Studies, it is remarkable that in the interviews the need for sharing and cooperative effort came out so strongly.

Target groups: Policy makers at the European, national, regional and local

2.5. Promote innovative models of active participation in the arts

The idea of "active" participation is broad and difficult to define. It includes attendance at formal events, like going to a movie or to a concert (Audience by Habit or Choice), as well as informal cultural action, like participating in community activities or taking care of local heritage, amateur productions or daily activities like reading a book. Sometimes an artwork just arrives in your public space (Audience by Surprise).

Many of the Case Studies in this Report highlight a massive range of tools, approaches and strategies for engaging in a consistent and meaningful way. People with different background, needs and expectations are invited. A need emerges to re-conceive audiences as partners and guests rather than as consumers. Participatory approaches need to be further cultivated and assessed. There is clearly, as we interpret from the Case Studies, a connection between active participation and the sustainability of the relations. The democratic impact on a community, although not yet properly measured, is demonstrated again and again by our Case Studies.

To be fully effective, it is necessary that public policies combine measures in support of access with measures focused on supporting **active participation**: in decision-making, in creative production and in defining relevant content. Audiences can be met as active interlocutors through a range of practices, from the occasional consultation to participatory planning and co-created actions.

Implementation examples:

- At national and local levels, clear requirements should be formulated to encourage cultural institutions to experiment and to implement active participation in their projects and institutional praxis.
- Provide space for self-managed, independent arts initiatives that dare to enter into direct, participatory relationship with their audiences.
- Stimulate the use of participatory approaches in the funding and design of new cultural places. New kinds of spaces are needed, designed and maintained by the users.
- Stimulate research focusing on co-creative practices, in order to assess different impacts on audience engagement, on the sense of community, on well-being.
- At the local level, policies should encourage and support bottom-up initiatives aimed at preserving, taking care, (re)generating and promoting cultural heritage and at producing and sharing amateur practices. Citizens engaged through culture become active citizens.

Others did

- Organisations like Maison des Metallos (FR), Renlund Museum (FI), Teatro dell'Argine and others work extensively with a participatory approach, although only sometimes linked to policy priorities (eg the Municipality of Paris re-opened a venue and nominated new artistic directors with the explicit mandate to involve excluded citizens through theatre).

Target groups: National, regional, local public servants and policy makers. Artists and cultural operators. Arts Universities and other formal educational institutions. Community centers.

2.6. *Enable conditions for long-lasting processes, including investments in dedicated staff positions to focus on innovative approaches to Audience Development*

AD and AE projects are often conceived and implemented in a very limited timeframe (normally a year or less), with impossible objectives and quick-fix thinking. This reduces significantly the capacity to transform brave attempts into changed organisational praxis. This concern was expressed by many of the Case Studies and when they felt unsatisfied, it was often because of the lack of continuity and dedicated staff time.

Audience Development processes, to be fully effective, require a medium-long term perspective. It is important to create the conditions that guarantee continuity and secure audiences' relations and spin-offs to projects.

Time and continuity represent crucial factors for managing the risk of inevitable "failures" to obtain immediate results. Arts organisations set ambitious and challenging objectives, reaching out to difficult audiences or creating a sense of belonging in a community. Managing the legacy of a project is sometimes more important than the project itself. A sudden and unexpected interruption, before any outcomes could possibly emerge, can have discouraging effects on all the subjects involved: the audience, the staff and the artists.

It is essential to create political and institutional conditions aimed at supporting the courage to test and develop fragile AD initiatives, with long term perspectives.

Implementation examples:

- At national and local levels, clear requirements and dedicated multi-annual funds should be dedicated to organisations that develop challenging AD projects or medium-term processes/investments in engagement efforts.
- Raise awareness among cultural leaders about the importance of planning proper conditions to manage the "legacy" of AD projects and guarantee continuity, in case of success.

Others did:

To be included in this study, organisations needed to have a stable staff dedicated to AD. For some of them it took a while - and an economic effort- to get there. On the other hand, the ADESTE project¹ showed how fragile AD staff positions can be within organisations when the importance of their strategic role is not fully understood (and concretely implemented with the required investments). Most of failures reported to us happened because of the missing point of continuity and organisational commitment.

Target audience: Policy makers and public servants at the national, regional and local levels. Cultural leaders and institutional directors. Boards of cultural organizations.

2.7. Establish clear and realistic guidelines for artists and artistic directors in cultural institutions supported by public funding to adapt their programmes and objectives to a more audience-centric perspective

Artistic leadership for publicly financed arts organizations must develop a greater sensitivity to the long term development goals of any society.

At the same time, policy makers must offer **legitimacy** to serious audience development.

Implementation example:

- Any public financial investment - at the European, national, regional or local levels - should have defined Audience Development expectations, acceptable to all shareholders. This should be a clear part of any funding agreement and developed in close association with the artists and cultural institutions doing the work.

Target groups: Evaluators of Creative Europe and other EU funding schemes. Boards and policy makers at the national, regional and local levels. Cultural leaders and operators. Artists.

2.8. Prioritize cultural venues and initiatives that mix audiences, bringing diverse ethnic, age and social groups together for common experiences.

It is clear that one of the greatest cultural challenges in Europe today is breaking down barriers between different circles and groups in our society. A strong motivation for Audience Development is to open cultural experiences to wider participation. It is also clear that cultural institutions and their venues are unintentionally often designed for "traditional" audiences and don't reflect the actual social environment and complexity of the societies they operate in.

The true value of a cultural experience is in sharing, since our common experiences become the basis for shared values.

Implementation example:

- To encourage crossover; when supporting the design, building or renewal of cultural venues, policies should encourage the creation of diverse places, providing a variety of opportunities for diverse audiences, rather than art form- or tradition-specific venues.

¹ See http://www.adesteproject.eu/sites/default/files/ADESTE_Step_Towards_FINAL.pdf

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Case Studies - indicative examples:

- Södra Teatern (SE), Maison des Métallos (FR), John Rylands Library (UK) and other organisations selected for this study went through important changes in space design to be able to attract and push forward the mixity of their audiences. An effort that can be strongly supported by a well-conceived space to make different kind of people feel welcomed.

Target groups: Policy makers at national, regional and local levels. Architects. Civil associations. Activists. Cultural and community centers and their leadership.

3. CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME: SUGGESTIONS FOR AD CURRENT DEFINITIONS AND AWARD CRITERIA

One of the objectives of the study was to contribute to the fine-tuning of definitions and award criteria to evaluate projects within the framework of the Creative Europe Programme. It's worth noting that the study is focused on organisations while Creative Europe is focused on projects. This implies that the long-term perspective for a strategic approach to AD can't be itself a reference for projects of short-term character, often too limited to produce evidence-based results when it comes to organizational learning or hard-to-reach target groups.

Nevertheless projects that address the AD priority should embed the strategic, long-term perspective as a background to ensure future sustainability and impacts on the participating organisations' approach and capacity-building in the field of AD.

3.1. Recommendations for the drafting of the call

- The AD definition could refer to the study, the glossary and the GUIDE PART1; it should be recommended to read them carefully before applying with that priority. This is to ensure that the AD concept is fully understood and challenged.
- The call should stress the importance of harmonization between long-term organisational change and the short-term change impact of the project. How will the experiments built into the project be sustained in the organisations involved?

3.2. Recommendations to the Commission and the selected evaluators

- We recommend that Evaluators read the study and the glossary. As basic knowledge.
- The evaluation criteria should place a high value on those project features that show a clear understanding of AD as a long-term process. This means giving special attention to projects that manifest a commitment towards future development and sustainability, considering AD as an organisational issue that requires specific competence and organisational commitment, not just a project reaching out audiences for a specific programming.
- Some elements related to this kind of understanding might be:
 - **Data.** A good knowledge of target audiences, including actions intended to gather and interpret them, is the root of effective AD strategies. Thus, a clear understanding of present and future audience profiles should frame the specific objectives of the project proposal. If target audiences are defined in the application, they should be analysed clearly and factually, beyond broad generalizations, like "immigrants" or "youth".
 - **Targets.** A clear focus on targeted audiences, not only on normally excluded ones but taking into account the whole spectrum of AD strategies (audience by habit, by choice, by surprise). Audience by surprise is certainly the greatest challenge for cultural and social development. A focus on excluded audiences has to be highly valued. But the case studies showed that effective AD strategies are fulfilled when the entire spectrum is considered.

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- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should be part of any project, not just in the field of audience growth or diversification but also in terms of organisational impacts. Efforts to approach a well thought through qualitative evaluation should be a priority, as quantitative evidence can be measured mainly in the long term, often beyond the project's life cycle.
- **Training and organisational thinking.** In many Case Studies, capacity-building was an effective step in developing AD strategic thinking. Projects that make explicit reference to staff training and a clear organisational commitment to achieve audience goals should be prioritized.

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