

Executive Summary: D'Art Report 34b

The arts and environmental sustainability: an international overview

November 2014

In 2013 [Julie's Bicycle](http://www.juliesbicycle.com) and the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies ([IFACCA](http://www.ifacca.org)) established a partnership aimed at informing international arts leaders about global developments in policies and programmes related to culture and environmental sustainability, and how these impact on national arts and cultural organisations. Our aims were to broaden the understanding of environmental sustainability across the international arts community; indicate what levels of aspiration and intention already exist among national arts funding agencies and culture ministries; and identify the potential for further work, collaboration and partnerships. We thank the Canada Council for the Arts and Arts Council Ireland for their financial support for this research. The full report is available at:

www.ifacca.org/topic/ecological-sustainability/ and <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/resources/publications> .

Survey and research findings

Twenty-three survey responses were collected from a diverse cross-section of countries and regions. The key findings from the survey can be summarized as follows:

1. Most respondents believe environmental sustainability to be relevant to arts councils and cultural ministries, and to the organisations they fund.
2. For the majority of respondents, efficiency savings are the primary motivation for action. Regulations and compliancy sit alongside ethical and moral concerns as the other key drivers.
3. There is a broad spectrum of engagement with environmental sustainability ranging from very engaged and literate, providing resource support, investment, and funding opportunities; to well-intentioned but inactive.
4. Most respondents do not have a division or unit with a specific focus on environmental sustainability, but almost half have a staff member (internal or in another government department) with a relevant remit.
5. While the level of general environmental and sustainability literacy is high and organisations are philosophically supportive of environmental action, it has yet to be translated into widespread practical resourcing and support.
6. While a third of respondents request that funded arts organisations consider environmental impacts as part of their subsidised activities, few are strongly proactive in providing the resources to do this.
7. Four respondents have invested in research on environmental sustainability and over half the respondents expressed interest in developing resources and support for the organisations they fund.
8. For some countries the arts and culture sectors are (or shortly will be) subject to direct environmental legislation. However, for the majority legislation is not specific to the arts. From our survey, at least nine agencies are anticipating legislation and translating it into policy.
9. References to culture and the arts' relationship to the environment and sustainable development were cited in a substantial number of cultural, environmental, and sustainable development policies.
10. There is a clearly differentiated approach to environmental sustainability between developed and developing economies. Preoccupations and priorities vary according to social, economic, political and geographical context.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Building a reasonably comprehensive evidence base to make the case for environmental sustainability in the arts for funders, partners and other stakeholders (especially those with sustainability and environmental remits) would stand the sector in good stead. The research suggests that the level of literacy in environmental sustainability has some way to go before there is a shared narrative with only one respondent gathering data across its portfolio as a funding requirement.

Based on the findings of this research report, there are a number of initiatives that could be taken to enhance the level of inclusion of environmental sustainability in cultural policymaking and action:

1. Explore the feasibility of creating a central coordination function that could provide information or resources to support national and regional networking and/or hub development.
2. Identify the level of interest and commitment by potential key partners to support the development of such an international information and resource service either in an advisory or financial capacity.
3. Identify strategic regional and national partners that could assist in resource development and delivery.
4. Investigate the potential to develop a shared understanding of the basis for measuring environmental impacts thereby allowing for aggregation and analysis, tracking of progress on reducing those impacts and comparison of environmental performance. A shared methodology and tools would enable efficiency and avoid duplication; important given limited resources and expertise.
5. Develop and distribute material that would build environmental literacy and data to understand environmental impacts and develop international codes of practice which can sit alongside social and financial data.
6. Build a narrative and evidence base appropriate to regions and countries that will help make the case for environmental sustainability to funders, partners and other stakeholders.
7. Consider options for developing funding opportunities and streams for arts and cultural organisations to develop environmentally sustainable cultural and business practice.
8. Encourage key national and regional agencies to mainstream environmental sustainability into policy statements as a matter of course and have action plans and accountability trails to evaluate, and celebrate, achievement.
9. Build on the principles of partnership and collaboration both as a community of arts councils and ministries of culture, and with external strategic bodies committed to addressing sustainability challenges such as the C40 initiative, United Nations, governments and, where appropriate, the corporate sector.
10. Encourage inter-departmental or inter-ministerial groups for the development, design and implementation of policies on culture and environmental sustainability.
11. Encourage knowledge and skills transfer and exchange between developing and developed countries.
12. Continue to promote the value of culture in achieving the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, identifying what the implications and opportunities for environmental sustainability in the arts and culture might be.

Full report: www.ifacca.org/topic/ecological-sustainability/ or <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/resources/publications>
For more information contact info@ifacca.org or info@juliesbicycle.com