

**ON-AIR: REFLECTING
ON THE MOBILITY OF ARTISTS
IN EUROPE**

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

THE JOURNEY AND ITS DESTINATIONS

**Maria Tuerlings, director Trans Artists
& Yasmine Ostendorf, project co-ordinator ON-AiR**

With this publication the partners of the ON-AiR project aim to take you on a 'journey', reflecting on the current state of mobility in which the artists in Europe operate and their art flourishes. It also includes a summary of the results and outcomes of the ON-AiR project.

There's a popular saying: 'Travel broadens the mind'. When you least expect it, you encounter the crazy ones, the geniuses, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the square pegs in the round holes and the ones who see things differently from your perspective.

To be able to learn from other cultures, to trigger your imagination, to develop special skills, to be able to understand why things happen differently in another country from your own, to realise a project that could never have been achieved in your own environment, to be inspired, to fail, to find your passion or to have an enlightening unexpected encounter are some of the things that are likely to happen when stepping out of your comfort zone.

WHEN YOU UN-SETTLE.

Mobility isn't obvious for everyone. It is also not necessary for everybody. At the same time, we feel that those who do act on the

urge to be mobile should have access to the resources, tools and expertise to achieve it successfully.

The word mobility derives from the Latin *mōbilis*, which roughly translates as 'moveable' – being able to move from one place to another. As simple as this might seem, the reality is more complicated. Ranging from limited financial resources to problems getting a visa and other regulatory barriers, there are many challenges to solve before arriving at your desired destination.

In close collaboration with dedicated partners, Trans Artists initiated a meeting in 2009 – 'the Prologue'. Partners playing key roles in EU mobility schemes were invited to take stock of what was needed to improve the mobility of artists in the different European regions. This meeting marked the birth of the partner project ON-AiR.

The initiators of ON-AiR identified two urgent issues:

- **An imbalance between knowledge and skills among potential users of AiR programmes (knowing that AiR opportunities are 'out there' is different from having the skills to access and make use of them).**
- **The need for exchange of expertise between providers of AiR programmes and other cultural partner organisations, to sustain**

and further develop their role as catalysts for mobility.

The initiators decided to address these issues through two types of activity:

- **Tailor-made workshops for artists (all disciplines and age groups) using specially created tools.**
- **Seminars where partner organisations would meet, exchange experiences and develop a strategy to ensure the continuity of this knowledge exchange.**

18 partner organisations across 15 EU countries committed themselves to organising tailor-made workshops for their local and regional artists in order to fulfil their need for information on AiR opportunities and mobility. This informal platform became the basis for other collaborations, future and joint projects building on experiences gained in the ON-AiR collaboration project. A grant from the DG EAC of the European Commission and the support of many artists and partner organisations made this exceptional and successful ON-AiR journey possible.

The destinations on this journey are not random – they are all linked to the outcomes of the project. With workshops given across 15 European countries, many aspects of mobility were addressed, discussed and researched. New focal points that required more attention rose to the surface.

Not only did we zoom in on the artist's perspective, but also on the point of view of the anthropologist, the philosopher, the researcher, the policy maker, the teacher, the insider and the outsider.

An Editorial Team consisting of 18 mobility experts from the different regions of Europe, all working as partners in ON-AiR, proposed 10 topics or thoughts for a more in-depth

approach. Ten essays by authors from across Europe are the result. The content and format of the essays differ enormously: varying from a letter written to a Resident Artist, to the examination of the much-discussed 'brain drain' phenomenon in Eastern Europe.

The second part of this book introduces the direct sources for the topics the essays are based on: the workshops and seminars of ON-AiR. Workshops on residency opportunities and mobility for young artists (Poland and Austria), mid-career artists (Sweden), curators (Slovenia), designers and architects (Macedonia), students (Turkey and Scotland), dancers (Hungary), actors (Romania), encounters with residency organisers (Belgium and Slovakia) and many more. The introduction to the topics and outcomes of these workshops is accompanied by material specially compiled by the local partner to accompany their workshops. Some choose the form of an interview, others a cultural mapping of the region or insight into possibilities for financial support. They were all used as an extension of the ON-AiR workshop manual given to participants (downloadable at www.on-air-mobility.org). The basic manual provides information about the process of becoming an artist-in-residence, how to select a residency, how to apply and existing mobility networks.

This publication does not intend to solve problems, nor does it offer a complete overview of them. It is meant to share issues we experienced during the project with others so that they can use the basic information, build on the learning and not have to continually 're-invent the wheel'.

The publication offers different perspectives on the current situation and also suggests future 'destinations'. As you will read

in the State of Affairs, several ideas are being developed to continue the collaborations that started through ON-AiR. Continuity of collaboration and sharing are the cherished wish and need expressed by all the partners and participants in the project.

Major changes and challenges are ahead of us, in our countries and further afield. This makes effective and sustainable collaboration more important than ever.

It is our desire this publication provides inspiration for the times ahead of us, for critical thinking, to trigger ideas and creativity, to motivate and stimulate artists as well as other cultural operators and to act as a stepping stone for further reflection.

This publication would not have been possible without the generous support of many: the DG EAC of the European Commission, the Mondriaan Foundation, the ON-AiR partners and all their partners, through whom their participation in the project was possible, the essay writers, translators, the editorial team, the Trans Artists staff and its complete dedication to the project, as well as the publication and everyone that made the project a great success. A sincere thank you to you all!

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