DECARBONISING THE ARTIST AND AUDIENCE MOBILITY IN MUSIC

White Paper

2026

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1. Introduction and Context

"A world where music does not have an environmental impact is a world without music."
– Matt Brennan (2021)[1]

The climate of urgency around climate change, its potential impacts on the planet and human society, and finding ways to take meaningful action to avoid it, or more recently, adapt to it, has produced ambitious pacts and frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. These frameworks set down high-stakes goals of carbon neutrality by mid-century. Leaving aside the relative political cooling of pro-climate action policies in the last few years, which will hopefully turn out just a tiny detour in the otherwise progressive movement, the net zero discourse lent legitimacy to the thinking that everyone – from the biggest fossil fuel producer in the world to the emerging jazz musician biking to her next gig – has the agency and a responsibility to act.

The approach that no action is too small is strengthened in the music and cultural sector more broadly by the dual role we see for music and the arts. On the one hand the music sector, as everyone else, has to reduce their carbon footprint to net zero eventually. On the other hand, music and the arts more broadly are often credited with a unique potential to shape and change people's mind – the values, attitudes, and behaviour. This argument, often called the handprint, emphasises the surplus symbolic value of acting environmentally sustainably even if the action itself has a small footprint and marginal reduction potential. It can become an example to be scaled up.

This experimental thinking underpins the Better Live project. By focusing on an issue – decarbonising artist and audience mobility in live music – conceptualising principles of action, making limited but potentially revealing experiments, doing research of the very real challenges in the complex landscape of the intersection of music sector practices and policy, and finally formulating policy recommendations, it acts in the hope that smaller acts can be made bigger by these spillover and learning effects. Or, as the project has come to find out, sometimes bigger needs to be made smaller, because smaller just might be better.

1.1. Environmental sustainability in music: a focus on mobility

There has been a gradually growing amount of research, both in the academic as well as professional consultancy spheres, on the carbon footprint of the music sector.[2] While a comprehensive picture of the entire footprint is still being gradually assembled, it seems credible that live music activities – organising concerts and festivals and moving around artists and audiences – makes up a significant portion of the total. In turn, it is the segment of artist and audience mobility that is arguably the most significant portion, making up even up to 80% of the total of live music.[3]

[1] Brennan, M. (2021). The infrastructure and environmental consequences of live music. In K. Devine & A. Boudreault-Fournier (Eds.), *Audible infrastructures: Music, sound, media*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190932633.003.0006.
[2] See for example the recent Declic study, available online: https://declic-musiques.org/.
[3] Brennan, M., Scott, J. C., Connelly, A., & Lawrence, G. (2019). Do music festival communities address environmental sustainability and how? A Scottish case study. *Popular Music, 38*(2), 252–275. 1 https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143019000035.

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol provides an effective conceptual and practical framework of measuring and comparing the carbon footprint of many kinds of action. The scope 1-2-3 system has given a clear enough methodology for organisations, also in the live music sector (e.g. venues and festivals), to calculate the carbon footprints of the energy use, waste management, travel and other aspects of operations. However, most things to do with artist and audience travel falls into scope 3 category and is by definition outside of the direct control of the organisation doing the measuring. While there is an increasing amount of research and also action approaches in this space, such as good tips how organisers could induce audiences to choose more sustainable travel options and how artists could, at least in theory, build better tours, these remain fragmented, often challengingly indirect and unscalable.

The Better Live project is built on previous collaborations on a European level, such as the Footprints project[4], that provided added evidence, though within a limited scale of cases, to the broader claims about the weight of artist and audience travel in the overall carbon footprint of live music actors. The Better Live has taken this path further by theorising that co-programming as a principle of action can lead to more optimal tour planning and by building more locally oriented co-programming networks artists can be taken closer to audiences which might induce them to travel less, at least to concerts.

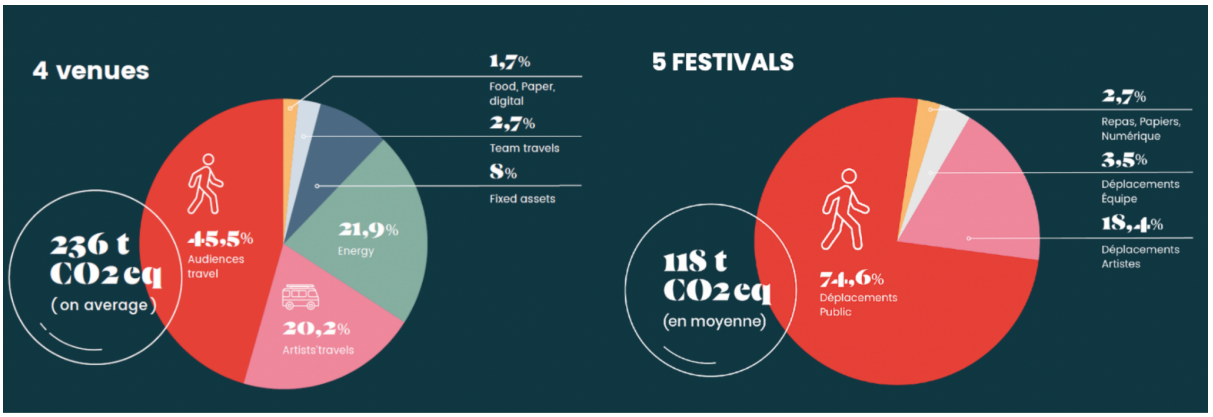

Figure 1. The results of the Footprints project. Source: [What are the carbon impacts? Footprints]

Any attempt to deal with decarbonisation needs to be ambitious and to some degree uncompromising as in facing the stark reality of difficult tradeoffs without evasion. Indeed, a truly radical, though entirely theoretical, approach to cutting the carbon footprint of artist mobility would simply implement a blanket ban on all unsustainable travel, such as flying. This is not achievable in real life and as an ideal benchmark would be undesirable, harmful and ultimately ineffective. Music thrives on connection and artists roam across political and cultural borders for complex reasons, including artistic growth, connecting with diverse audiences, experiencing other cultures, and, yes, extending audiences and markets for career viability and business aims.[5] Also, cultural diversity is a desired policy goal and societal value and without artists being able to move around this will be impossible. It would also be unjust, because an all-out reduction in international travel with no sensitivity to context can lead to exclusion, marginalisation and social injustice.[6] It is easy to opt out of flying when living in a

[4] The Footprints study is available online: https://betterlivemusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Carbon-footprint-study.pdf.
[5] Kuznetsova-Bogdanovitš & Sillamaa (to be published in 2026).
[6] See: Wilson, C., R., Le Sourd, M. (2022). Learning From (Im)Mobility: Revamped Cultural Mobility Formats and Remaining Challenges. In: Vidović, D, Duxbury, N. (Eds.). I-Portunus Houses: Volume 1. Mobility in Culture: Conceptual Frameworks and Approaches. Kultura Nova Foundation. 62-85.

well connected metropolitan area, but islands and more remote rural areas or small towns cannot be assigned to permanent seclusion. Finally, pinning artists into place will simply induce audiences to move more, as was evidenced by the recent set of 10 concerts in Munich by Adele.[7] Better Live thus poses the continued international mobility of artists as a goal next to decarbonising the live music sector.

The idea of making artist and audience travel more sustainably is not new and there are several approaches to this. A more superficial tactic is to list and require greener modes of travel over those with the highest carbon footprint, such as flights and using non-electric private vehicles. This is arguably problematic for being context-blind. As will be clear also from the Better Live analysis, any sustainable travel paradigm must operate within the broader bounds of geographical specificities and the limits of local transportation infrastructure. A more nuanced approach to “green mobility”, “deep mobility” or “slow touring” is context-sensitive and also multi-dimensional in the sense that the carbon footprint is viewed as only one factor that shapes overall reasoning and decision making about travelling.

Still, the premise of scaling co-programming is ambitious and will necessarily meet several challenges. One of them comes from the perspective of policy making. Artist and audience mobility are collective action problems. An artist tour is a complex process where accountability for decision making is diffuse and responsibility is shared across a network of interdependent actors, including musicians, managers, booking agents, promoters, and venue programmers. Aligning incentives to optimise routing or substitute air travel with slower, lower-carbon transport remains a structural challenge that individual actors lack the agency to solve alone, but policymaking works best if leverage points can be identified so effective intervention methods can be designed.

This white paper provides the goals and the context for Better Live’s research aims and presents both the conceptual as well as experimental results of the research processes. It ends with a set of general policy recommendations as guidelines toward possible actions that need to be adapted to the specific context of particular countries.

1.2. Research goals

The Better Live project had two main goals:

Goal 1: Find ways to reduce the carbon footprint of artist and audience mobility as a share of the total footprint of tours, festivals, concerts and other related events.

Goal 2: Maintain or even increase geographical diversity of programming and artist mobility.

The main premises of the Better Live project were built on the following assumptions.

1. Mobility of artists and audiences is one of the largest sources of carbon footprint in the live music sector. This has been shown by various studies.

[7] While most coverage addressed the significant economic impact of music tourism to Munich in favourable terms, such as “Adele and Coldplay 'break Munich tourism record' | IO Magazine”, Julian Vogels, the European Climate Pact Ambassador, did a critical analysis of the carbon footprint of massive audience travel. The data is available in GitHub even though Vogels’ website featuring the article is down.

2. Regardless of the first premise, international and regional circulation of artists is a key element of sustainable careers as well as diverse cultural life. Advocating for radical reduction in artist mobility is thus not desirable and would be counterproductive as it would likely prompt further increase in audience travel.
3. Reducing the carbon footprint from mobility is possible through:
    a. Making tours longer and optimising routing, thus avoiding "one-off's" or situations where an artist flies in for a single concert. This way more music can potentially reach more audiences within a single tour.
    b. Taking artists to smaller places enriching local cultural life and also disincentivising audiences travelling to bigger cities for more varied musical experiences.[8]
    c. Opting for greener modes of transportation and other aspects of touring where possible.

The Better Live project had two tracks of research activities to seek answers to the project goals and make sense of their scalability across vastly differing contexts. One to collect experimental data, test some of the key premises and generalise principles of action. Another to take stock of the current state of affairs and possible challenges to implementing the Better Live learnings at scale, both with regards to the complex perspectives of live music actors as well as the policy environment.

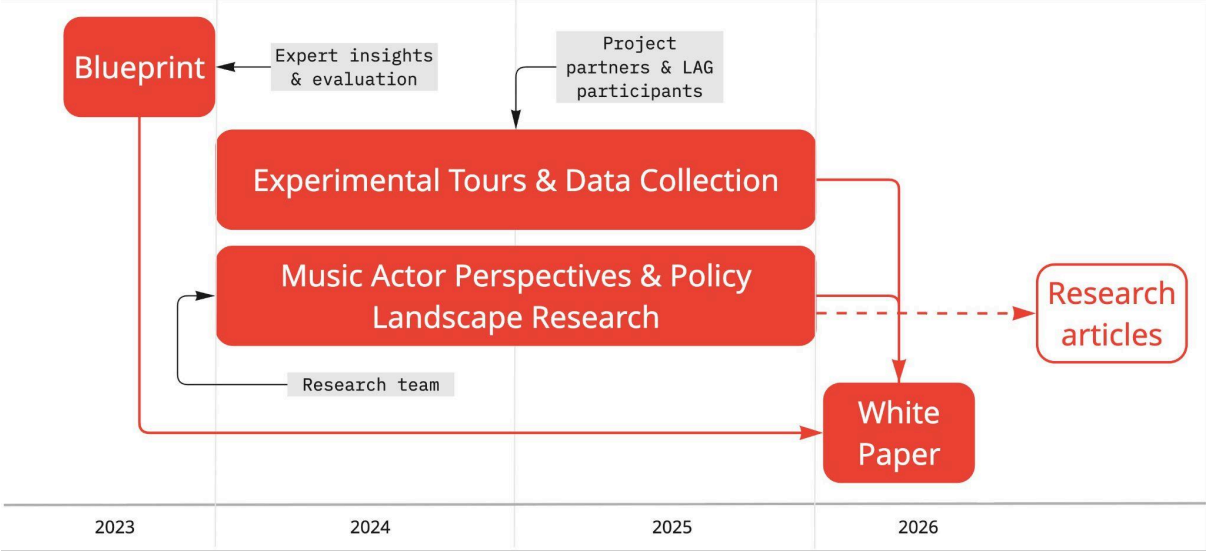

Figure 2. Better Live Experimentation and Research Timeline.

Experimental tours

The first research track thus focused on the experimentation with co-programmed tours in the nine Local Action Groups – regional clusters of venues, festivals, and promoters. In the first phase of the project a conceptual and methodological framework – the Better Live Blueprint[9] – was created detailing what kind of experimental data was needed and how to collect it. Then, as the experimental tours unfolded and the data was collected the carbon footprints of these tours and average tour stops were calculated.

[8] More about Audience Travel emissions from festival: https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Summary_Jam_Packed_Festival_Audience_Report_2009.pdf
[9] See: https://betterlivemusic.com/research/

Not all premises could be tested in practice in the experimentation as it would have required action on scale far beyond the capacity of any cultural cooperation project. Still, by relying on a mix of experimental data, heuristic benchmarks and theories of change the project sufficiently validated the hypothesis that **co-programming (within a region) as a *principle of action* helps to reduce the carbon footprint of artist and audience mobility**.

Researching music actor perspectives and policy landscapes

The second research track focused on analysing the challenges of applying the Better Live approach more broadly in two dimensions: the live music sector actor perspectives, including festivals, venues, promoters, artists, and agents, and the policy environment.

The **actor perspective** analysis focused on mapping the various strategic considerations the live music actors need to take into account when shaping their approach to any "low carbon strategy". These might relate to economic, social, cultural, or political dimensions.

The **policy analysis** mapped policies that might be relevant for live music practices as well as perspectives of near-future policy development with regards to environmental sustainability in culture, or more specifically in music.

This research was conducted in six countries represented also in the project: Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Spain.

2. Better Live Tours – The Experimental Evidence

Nine regional networks called Local Action Groups (LAGs) were created in the Better Live project as the organisational framework for experimentation with co-programmed tours.
LAGs involved more than 200 venues, festivals, promoters and other live music relevant actors as participants. In 2024 and 2025 these regional networks organised in total 64 tours including 363 artistic events involving 223 artists and taking place in 239 unique venues.

Figure 3. Better Live Local Action Groups (LAGs). Source: https://betterlivemusic.com/local-action-groups/.

The research goal with regards to these tours was to apply the Better Live key principle of action of co-programming, measure the carbon footprint of artists and where possible also audiences, and determine whether this can potentially help to reduce the overall carbon footprint of live music.

2.1 Methodology

In the first phase of the project a conceptual and methodological framework – the Better Live Blueprint[10] – was created. It defined key concepts and premises, detailed what kind of experimental data was needed and how to collect it. Then, once data was collected the carbon footprints of these tours and average tour stops were calculated.

Experimentation relied on the hypothesis that by increasing co-programming between local organisers within the Local Action Groups (LAG) and thus giving artists more (and more diverse types of) events per tour, we lower the overall mobility carbon footprint within the LAG and increase or at least maintain cultural offer and engagement per carbon footprint. This is achieved through:

1. **Lower average carbon footprint per one tour stop for artists** (through more events per region; and thus more "culture per footprint").
2. **Lower audience mobility carbon footprint**, by inducing audiences to travel more sustainably to their preferred events (including attending those that are closer to home)
3. **Maintaining geographical diversity of programming**

[10] See more: https://betterlivemusic.com/research/.

Determining the average carbon footprint (CF) per an "artistic event—tours did not only consist of concerts, but also workshops, residencies, social engagement, etc.—and also that it would constitute a reduction requires (1) the measurement and calculation of artist mobility per tour and per tour stop; (2) derive the average CF per an artistic event for the entire LAG; and (3) create a benchmark to compare this with to establish reduction. In Better Live, the artist travel CF per artistic event was calculated as an average derived from the total CF of all artist's tours per LAG. Data was collected on the number of travel parties, distance, and modes of transport for all performances. A custom built carbon calculation software was developed for the project which upon uploading the mobility data multiplied it with country-specific emission factors to determine the total CF in CO2e.[11] This total is divided equally by the number of artistic events to ensure each performance carries an equal weight, providing the average travel CF per artistic event for each LAG.

As historic data was missing the benchmark had to be created as a heuristic, based on modelling a "typical" artist tour in each country based on the artists that toured there in the Better Live project as well as an average number of events per your (often only one), and estimating a "typical" CF for an artistic event.

Initially audience mobility CF calculations per event were also planned, but the data collection proved so challenging and sporadic that no comprehensive calculations could be made across all events in the project. However, more than 60 audience mobility data sets were collected with highly varying sample size and data quality; also during the project the lead partner Le Periscope participated in a study focusing on audiences CF providing relevant insights (more on that in 2.3).

Geographical diversity of programming proved an even bigger challenge. First, a more accurate baseline creation would've required collection of precise artist programme data for each of the participating venues and festivals and the origin category (regional, national, international) of each artist attributed. This task proved to be beyond the capacity of this project on any scale that would've been useful for the project's purposes. Also, given that Better Live tours made up only a marginal part of the partner's full programming, either in the festival or a venue seasonal lineup, no significant effect would've been detectable. Ultimately, a very rough dataset was created by all participants estimating their overall average artist origin shares. This gives the most overall indication and might prove as a useful starting point for future research.

Thus, not all of the hypotheses could be tested experimentally in the project. This was due to the small scale of the project interventions, but also because of conceptual and methodological limitations. However, these limitations can be overcome by well-reasoned theories of change and credible expert-informed heuristic benchmarks.

2.1.1 Methodological limitations

There is a methodological discontinuity between (1) measuring and calculating the carbon footprint of concrete events after-the-fact; (2) making claims about potential or actual reduction; and (3) drawing normative guidelines for decisions and behaviour.

[11] The emission factors were drawn from ADEME's database.

Measuring and calculating are relatively straightforward in so far as the objects are clearly defined (what counts as an event, what types of emissions are to be included, etc.), sufficient data is collected, and there is adequate information about the carbon intensity of various sources, i.e. emission factors of all relevant modes of transport and other actions are known. In practice, collecting data is often difficult and sometimes impractical. Also, information about emission factors can be missing or insufficiently granular for many countries.

Claims about reduced emissions require a framework of benchmarks against which calculations can be measured and reductions claimed. Almost all such benchmarks are to some degree heuristic. However, with regards to artist tours, the uniqueness of the circumstances of each sets serious limitations to benchmarking and empirical comparability.

There are a plethora of guidelines for "green touring" and environmentally sustainable approaches to organising festivals and concerts. These almost always provide general principles for decision making, such as choosing a greener mode of transport over a more polluting one, etc. Such guidance can be useful and practical as everyone can adapt it to their particular context as best they can. While it is also possible to measure the actual carbon footprint of a tour (which then constitutes a mix of objective and subjective reductions), it is very difficult to imagine a framework that would allow for target setting and benchmarking absolute figures. The only useful benchmark is the counterfactual or in other words the imagined alternative of having done things differently.

Thus, an experimental-empirical approach presents several **conceptual and methodological limitations**.

First, a **tour is a fuzzy concept** with a conceptually clear center and an ambiguous boundary area. Calculating a carbon footprint of a tour requires clear starts and finishes and a definite number of events. There are many tours that are clear-cut: an artist flies from one continent to another, strings together a number of concerts within a reasonably optimal routing and returns home. However, there are also less clear cases. For example, artists stay at a place for a period – perhaps for a vacation or creative work purposes – and continues touring later. Or, concerts are intermittent with periods of breaks in between when artists return home, especially when the touring takes place closer to home. Or, when a group of musicians comes together for a tour, but it's punctuated by other individual performances, comings and goings of some of the musicians. Such partial overlap with "non-tour" related activities can make clear accounting conceptually challenging. Ultimately, however, all decisions are to some degree arbitrary.

Second, **every tour is unique** and thus cannot be usefully compared to past or projected future tours or a generic benchmark of an "average" tour, unless an artist really revisits the same exact itinerary some time later. A tour, or a standalone concert, can only be compared to a hypothetical alternative (a counterfactual) – what would have been the case, had things been organised differently. While this makes claims about objective emission reduction problematic, it can still be very useful as a modeling exercise for general guidelines supporting decision making.

Third, **emission reduction** can be viewed from a **subjective and an objective perspective** and they are not entirely overlapping. Individual behaviour and choices have both direct and

indirect effects on objective, or actual, emission reduction. A choice to walk instead of taking a car leads to an objective reduction – the emissions from the car ride will not be emitted. However, it is also possible to subjectively opt out of emitting behaviour, such as taking a flight and opt in for a greener option, such as taking a train (assuming it runs on fairly green electricity). In all likelihood, both modes of transport will still run and emit regardless of that individual choice. Reducing the flight carbon footprint therefore only counts as a subjective reduction – the individual did not partake in the emission; and not objective – the emission still takes place regardless.[12] However, choices between modes of transport, when scaled up in the population, can accumulate to a shift in market demand and eventually lead to an objective reduction with less flights being operated.

There are also **practical limitations,** mostly related to data collection and carbon footprint calculation.

A reasonable limit to granularity of data must be set in practice. It is fairly straightforward for artists or their representatives to collect and communicate the main modes of transport and the points of departure and arrival which allows to make main calculations of carbon footprint. However, it might be more difficult to convince them to clarify the type of the plane, whether it was fully or sparsely populated, or note down the mark and model of the car used for airport transfer – details that have a bearing in the carbon footprint calculation.

Collecting mobility data of audiences is also often complicated by practicalities. There is no single way to get all audience members to provide sufficiently granular data on their points of departure and return destination as well as all modes of travel. The most useful are adding such fields to digital ticket purchases, but these are mostly insufficiently granular for detailed data. For example, it is typical to require the buyer to input a zip code, but it remains open whether that is where that person is actually coming from and returning to the day of the concert and whether it extends to others in case multiple tickets are bought.

Another aspect is the availability, accuracy and granularity of emission factors for all types of transport in specific locations. Some countries publish and update this information regularly and reliably, others do not. Also, the national level might not be granular enough as different cities might rely on different sources of electricity. Finally, calculation methods differ in levels of granularity with some simply accounting for a flight as a mode of transport, others requiring to have the details of plane type or fuel type.

All these conceptual and practical limitations, however, can be sufficiently compensated by heuristic benchmarks and theories of change.

2.1.2 Theories of Change and Heuristic Benchmarks

Heuristic benchmarks are provisional reference points or proxy values derived from existing data, industry standards, or personal experience-based expertise, used when direct primary measurement is not feasible. When tracking exact data points is restricted by resource limits,

[12] This distinction between subjective and objective reduction aligns with Elisabeth Shove's (2010) critique that an over-emphasis on individual choice and behaviour (e.g. the choice of modes of transport) serves to hide to what degree it is constrained and shaped by "sociotechnical regimes" (such as transport infrastructures) that dictate objective outcomes. Even if an artist "chooses" the train, the objective reduction will be thwarted as long as the systemic infrastructure remains unchanged (the plane still flies). Shove, E. (2010). Beyond the ABC: Climate change policy and theories of social change. *Environment and Planning A*, *42*(6), 1273–1285.

these benchmarks serve as reliable approximations to model impacts and establish baselines.[13]

In order to be able to measure a reduction in carbon footprint of tours or single artistic events, a system of benchmarks is needed against which the reduction can be detected. Given the lack of historic data, several heuristic benchmarks needed to be created in the Better Live project.

1. A typical number of tour stops (artistic events) an artist in this music scene has in the target country or region. In Better Live, each country provided an expert estimation for this.
2. A model of a typical touring artist and the carbon footprint of their mobility per an artistic event. In Better Live, the benchmark model was created for each country to be similar to the artists that toured there within the Better Live setting.

These benchmarks were created based on the professional expertise and experience of the Better Live partner organisations.

A "**theory of change**" is a core concept in scientific evaluation of complex programmes and policies.[14] It refers to articulating explicitly the underlying and often implicit assumptions of why some activities are believed to lead to a specific outcome. In Better Live one of the key theories of change that cannot be experimentally tested due to lack of scale addresses the overall reduction of the artist and audience mobility as a result of co-programmed and better optimised tours on a regional level. The logic of the theory is as follows:

1. Assuming that there are a finite number of concert opportunities open for international artists in a region.
2. These slots can be filled with maximally separate bookings, i.e. all of them are one-offs; or they can be booked through co-programming the same touring artist and filling the slots in an optimal way.
3. While a longer tour will have a somewhat higher CF than a single concert visit, the average CF per tour stop will be lower.
4. optimising the slots for bookings in the region will lead to an overall less number of longer tours visiting the region and filling up the slots.
5. Thus, if all the slots for international artists are filled with ones coming from a co-programmed and optimised tour, their per event CF is lower adding up to a lower total CF coming from international tours in the region.

[13] Gigerenzer, G., & Gaissmaier, W. (2011). Heuristic decision making. Annual Review of Psychology, 62, 451–482. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120709-145346; Shah, A. K., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2008). Heuristics made easy: An effort-reduction framework. Psychological Bulletin, 134(2), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.2.207.

[14] Popularised by Weiss, C. H. (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families. In J. P. Connell, A. C. Kubisch, L. B. Schorr, & C. H. Weiss (Eds.), *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Volume 1, Concepts, methods, and contexts* (pp. 65–92). Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies.

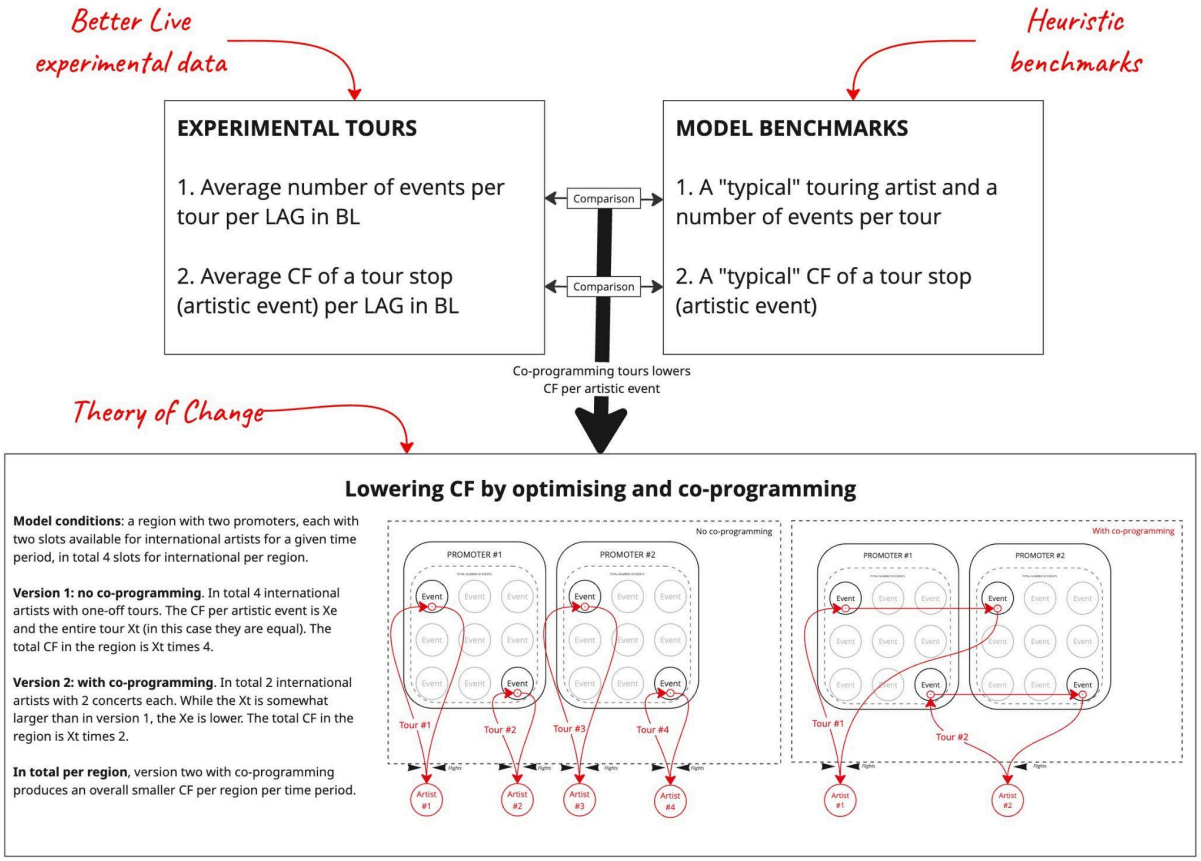

Figure 4. The combination of experimental data of actual tours, heuristic benchmarks and a theory of change to produce the argumentation for validating the hypothesis.

Another theory of change the project relies on is that if more concerts are organised closer to audiences also in small places, they are less induced to travel for cultural experiences. This is very difficult to test in practice as the mobility patterns of people are highly complex and cultural events are only one of many drivers.

2.2 The Carbon Footprint of the Co-Programmed Tours

The LAGs had a varying number of participants. In some cases the network was built from scratch while in other cases at least some participants had previous experience in working together and coordinating tours. This proved to play an important role as starting a new network and developing the processes takes considerable effort and resources.[15]

[15] See also Brennan et al (2019) in this point.

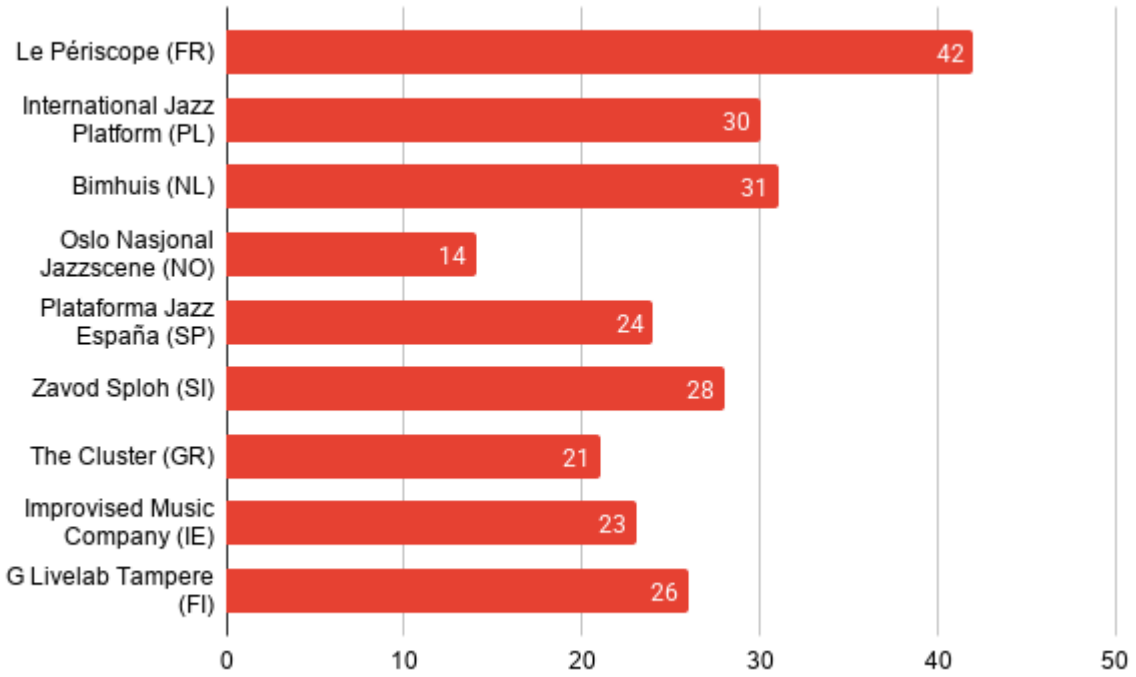

Figure 5. The number of venues and other participants per LAG organised by the leading partner and country.

The LAG was not a rigidly defined concept and no strict rules were in place to define who could or could not be a part of the LAG. In most cases the basic aim was that it should be possible to travel locally (trains, electric cars) rather than fly between LAG participants. However, in the case of Spain where the partner was a network of Spanish jazz festivals, at least some flying within the tours was inevitable. It was determined to be permissible because creating longer tours in Spain even with these conditions was considered a major development well worthy of testing.

As mentioned above, in the project 64 tours were organised that included 223 artists and 363 artistic events.

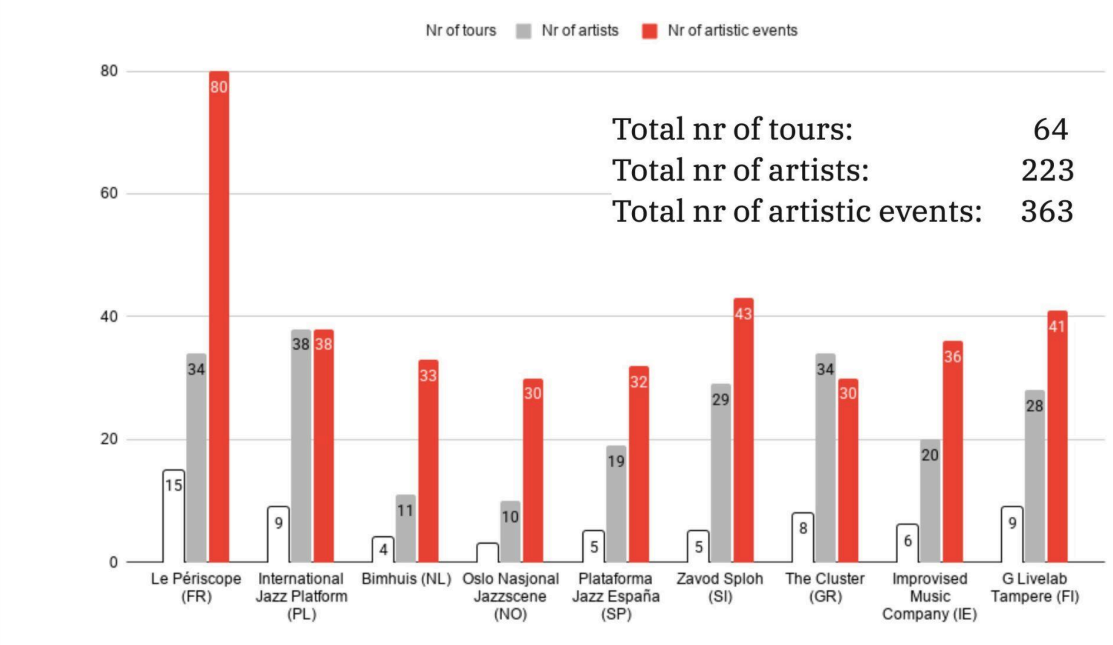

Figure 6. The number of tours, artists and artistic events per LAG and in total..

In the modelling exercise to create heuristic benchmarks for each LAG, the partners with local participants estimated a typical number of artistic events for an artist visiting their region. It was one in Poland, Greece, Ireland and Finland, meaning in those regions an internationally visiting artist usually only travels for one concert, no additional activities in the region are planned. It was two for Norway and Spain and three for France (the region anchored around Lyon), the Netherlands, and Slovenia. In the latter case there was already a working network the LAG was built around adding new participants.

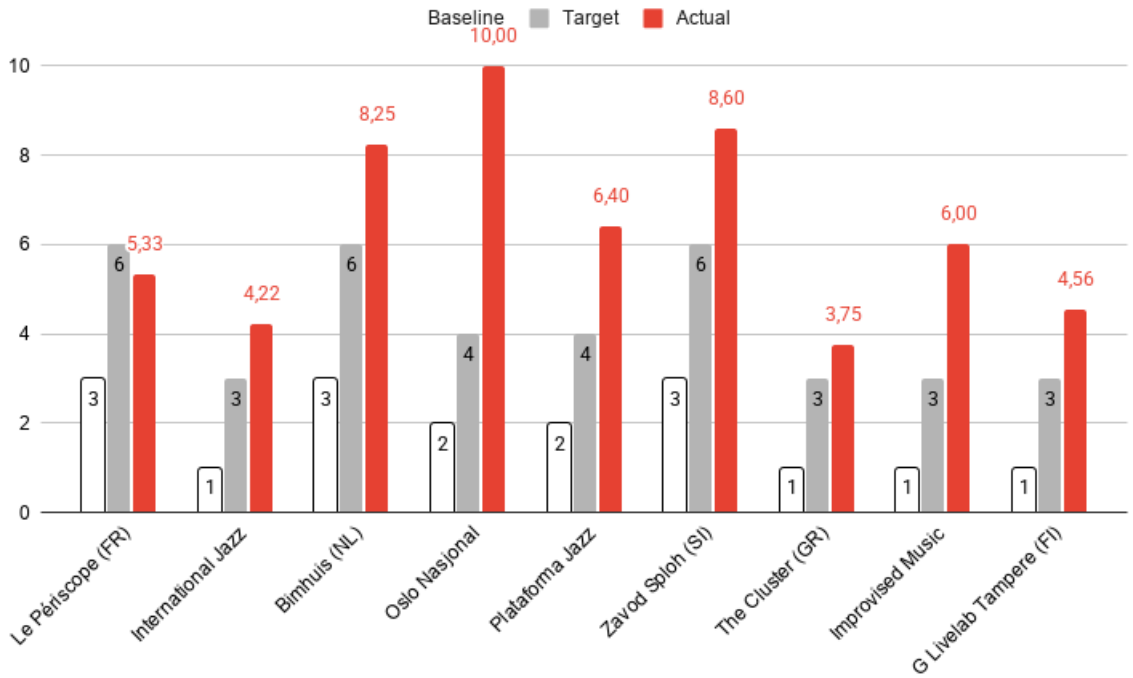

Figure 7. The baseline, target and actual average number of artistic events per tour per LAG.

Then, by the same process project targets were set by estimating how many artistic events on average per tour will the Better Live tours achieve in the LAG. As can be seen from the results, the estimates were fairly modest as the real results significantly overperformed with a single exception of France. It must be kept in mind that the number of tours organised was also different. In France, 15 tours were organised while in Norway only 2. Achieving longer tours is a function of several factors, but importantly also the organising capacity of the LAG leader as well as network partners. Given the limited resources of the project, there is an inevitable upper bound where the success will simply be capped because of oversaturation of opportunity in the network and the limits of organising capacity.

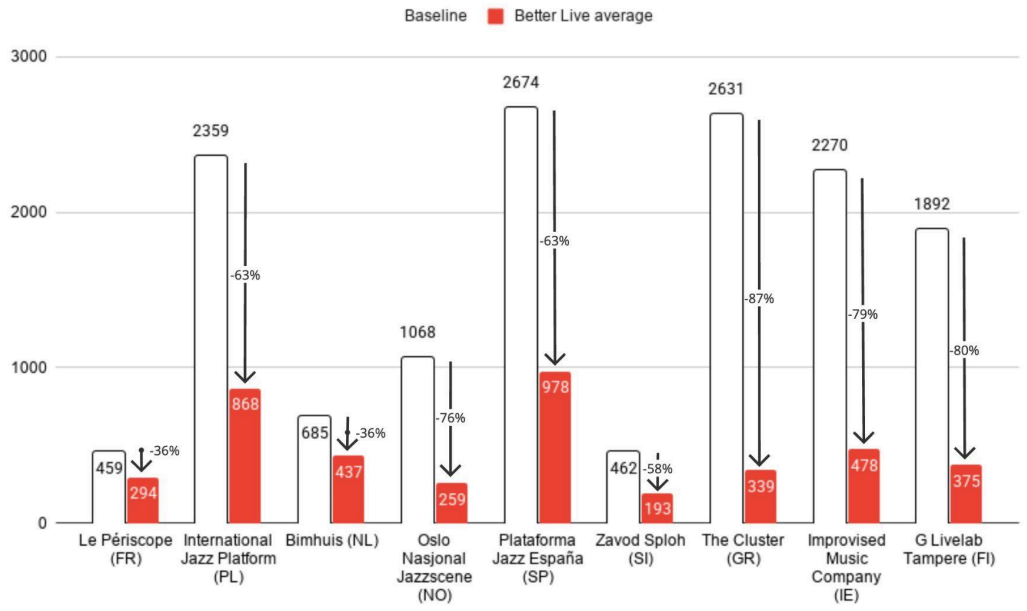

Figure 8. The baseline and actual average CO_2 impact of artistic events per LAG.

For each LAG a “typical” artist tour was modelled and based on this a carbon footprint baseline created for the tour and then the average artistic event. This was compared to the experimental results in the project and differences noted. In all cases the project results showed reductions in the average CO_2 emissions per artistic events. As explained above, these are highly reductive and at best indicative as there is no historically measured baseline. Also, actual tours and events are very different and there are many contextual factors that influence decision making in tour organisation. Still, these results confirm the general principle that if tours are made locally longer and more optimally routed with at least some heed given to more sustainable transport options, the result is more music per carbon footprint. This provides the confirmation, within the limited empirical data, to the key hypothesis of the project: co-programming as a principle of action will reduce the average carbon footprint of artistic events of a tour.

2.3 Audience mobility

The project blueprint provided several templates and the local organisers could choose methods that seemed feasible to them. Collecting audience mobility data is in general very difficult unless the organiser has control over digital ticket sales and can add a few questions to the information required when tickets are bought, such as the zip code of the buyer (in some cases this might be almost automatic) and the mode of transport chosen. Even then it's challenging to make the data precise. For example, it's possible that several modes of transport are needed to get to the venue. Also, attendees might come from one place and return to another; or they might be buying tickets to many people who all come from different places. Burdening the ticket buyer with too many questions is problematic.

Other methods include having people on site collecting the information directly from audience members or distributing QR codes to digital surveys that can be filled voluntarily. In all cases, the sample size is likely low and getting even that takes a lot of work. For smaller organisers, especially those working on a voluntary basis, this can be unfeasible.

Ultimately, all LAGs collected some sets of audience mobility data, but the sets from Ireland and Spain were significantly larger than the rest. In Spain, the dataset covers 15 distinct operations encompassing 36 individual artistic events. In Ireland, the data includes 29 unique events over six artist tours. Even then, it must be noted that the data collected is anecdotal, meaning it is not methodologically identical across all locations, does not cover every single event in the project, and lacks an established historical baseline for comparison. Instead, it provides useful context regarding travel choices in different places and can be a valuable starting point for further research.

Admittedly, each event and location has a unique combination of factors, from geographical, demographic, infrastructural, social, cultural, and otherwise that contribute to how and why cultural events work the way they do and what type of audiences find their way there. A thorough analysis of each of the locations would be needed to appropriately profile them and this is beyond the scope of the Better Live project. Therefore, experimental and theoretically hypothetical categorisations are proposed below for Spain in order to analyse the fragmented and methodologically diverse audience mobility data sets from there, as well as Ireland which has a uniform structure for all the data.

2.3.1 The Landscape Study in France

While not conducted as part of the Better Live project, a major study of audience mobility was done in France with the participation of BL's lead partner Le Périscope. The Landscape study[16] evaluated a substantial dataset of 750 000 ticketing records from 2023 across 42 French live music venues (primarily labelled SMACs) to map audience mobility patterns. Out of all available ticketing records, 665,000 entries were fully cleaned and processed based on purchaser postcodes. Through this dataset, the research mapped 441 distinct event capacity levels, which were then grouped into five major categories representing 100, 500, 1000, 1500, and 2000 capacity venues.

[16] The Landscape study was published in 2024 and conducted by The Green Room in partnership with Le Périscope, FEDELIMA, and SoTicket. The English version is available: Landscape study Audience travel in live music venues.

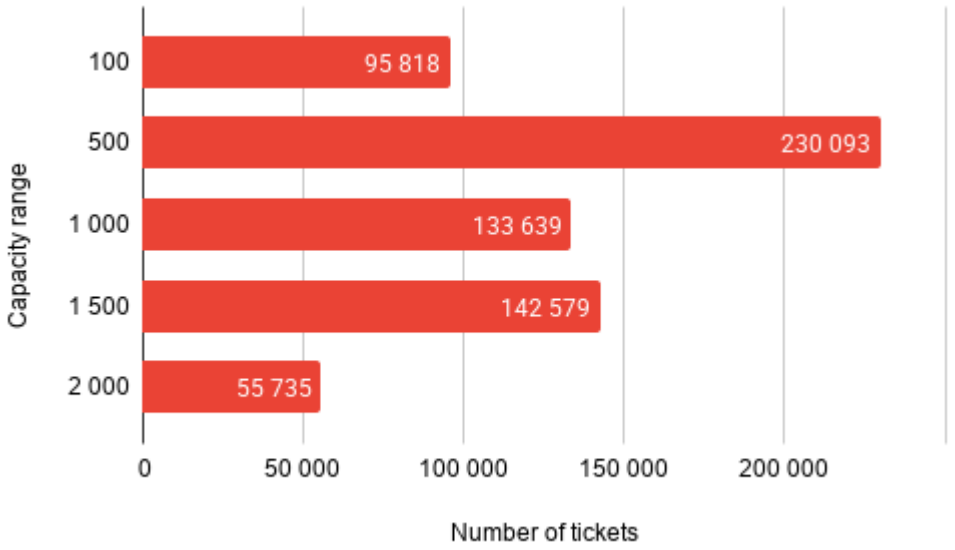

Figure 9. Ticket sales by capacity. Source: Landscape study.

The data establishes a robust correlation between event capacity and the distance an audience travels. As the capacity tier scales up, the geographic catchment area expands accordingly, resulting in higher average round-trip travel distances and a larger carbon footprint. The bigger the venues and events, the farther the audience travels.

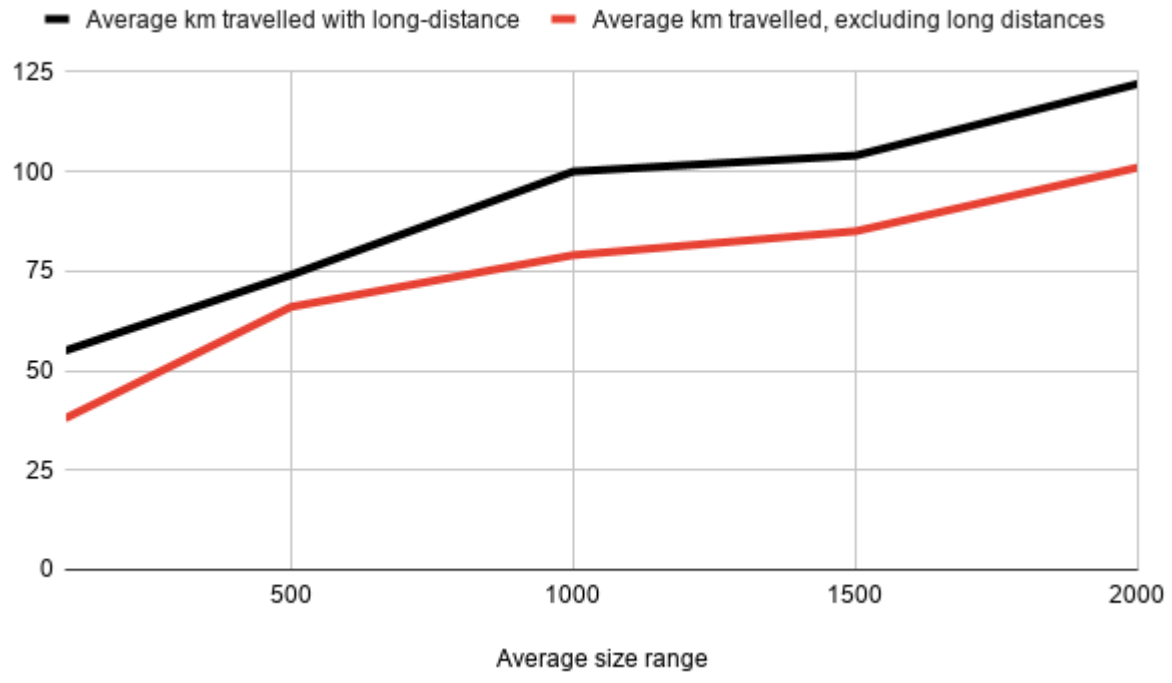

Figure 10. Average distance travelled per spectator (A-R) according to capacity range. Source: Landscape study.

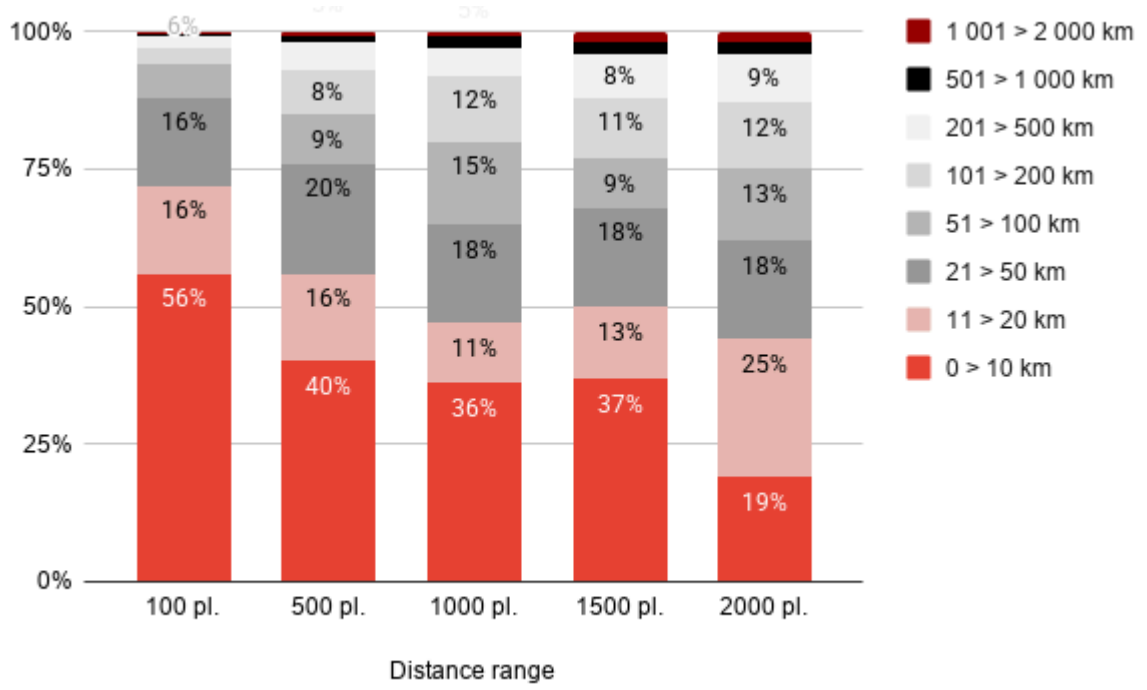

Figure 11. Average distribution of distances travelled by spectators (A-R) according to capacity category. Source: Landscape study.

The study concludes with recommendations for decarbonisation:

- **Addressing short-distance dependence.** In France, private cars account for 63% of everyday journeys under 80 km. Given that 41% of the car journeys tracked across all capacity tiers were under 5 km, a major carbon reduction lever exists in transitioning local audiences toward active walking or cycling infrastructure. This can be well in the realm of possibility for both event organisers as well as public authorities.
- **Excluding long-haul flights of tourists.** Extreme long-distance travel, particularly international flights, disproportionately inflate event carbon accounting. The study suggests excluding these emissions if the concert was merely an incidental activity within a broader tourist holiday, preventing misleading distortions in local venue reporting.
- **Ticketing optimisation.** Organisers are encouraged to adapt ticketing platforms to structurally capture precise data points beyond just the residential postcode, focusing specifically on collecting the actual point of departure (if different from home), the post-event return destination, and the primary intended mode of transit.[17]

2.3.2 Audience Mobility Case Study: Spain

In Spain, empirical data on audience mobility was collected across 15 venue and festival operations. These cases span a wide range of geographic landscapes, public transport networks, and event types and sizes.

[17] Since then the partners of the study have been collaborating with a ticketing platform to provide such tools for venues and concert promoters.

Audience Mobility Typology in Spain

The locations and events are grouped into three distinct territorial profiles based on their geographic and infrastructure characteristics:

1. **Metropolitan centres** including *Villanos del Jazz* (Madrid), the *FeminaJazz* series (Madrid and Móstoles), and the *Sevilla Swing Festival* (Seville), all characterised by dense urban areas and established public transport.

2. **Urban coastal areas and islands** including the *Festival Internacional Canarias Jazz & Más* (Canary Islands), *JazzCádiz* (Cádiz), *Clasijazz* and *Almerijazz* (both Almería), *Jazzahara* (*Zahara de los Atunes*), and the *Menorca Jazz Festival* (Menorca). These represent municipal centres operating within island or coastal holiday environments.

3. **Regional hubs** including *Nigrán Jazz* (Pontevedra), the *Festival Fifty-Fifty de Jazz y Poesía* (Avilés, Asturias), *Ultramar Club* (L'Escala, Girona), *Seda Jazz* (Valencia), and the *Fundación Caja de Burgos* series (Burgos), which draw audiences from wider provincial catchments lacking late-night cross-town transport infrastructure.

Data collection relied on voluntary audience surveys, in some cases via on-site QR codes, ticketing platform postcode extraction, and digital questionnaires. Response rates varied by event type. Travel distances were cleaned and grouped by event capacity tiers rather than fixed venue sizes.

An analysis of audience mobility data across these diverse Spanish live music events reveals distinct patterns based on geographic context, venue location, and event scale.

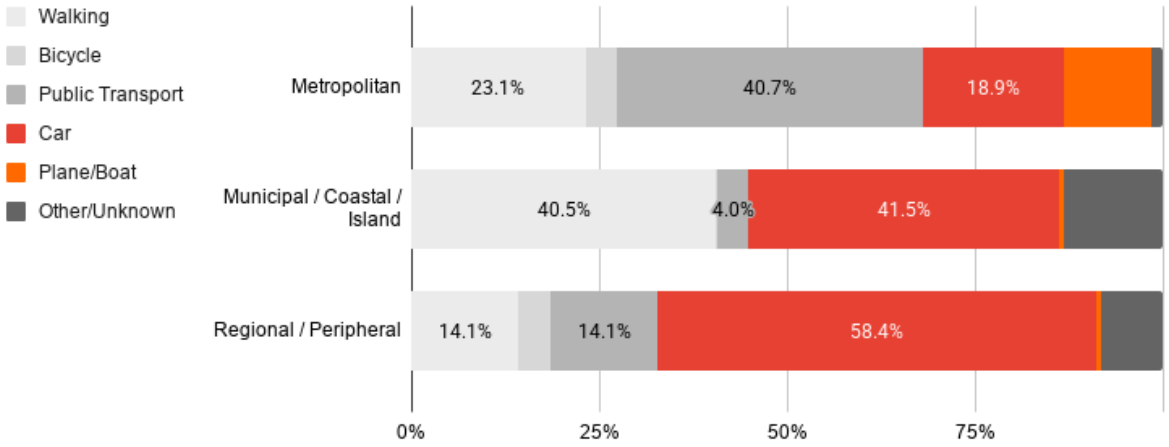

Figure 12. The relative shares of modes of audience transport organised by event location typology. Aggregated over 36 events taking place in 15 venues / festivals in Spain during 2024 and 2025.

Audiences attending events in metropolitan areas with dense urban settings, such as the *Villanos del Jazz* or *FeminaJazz* events in Madrid and the *Sevilla Swing Festival* in Seville,

show a clear preference for public transport and active mobility (walking and cycling), which frequently account for 50% to over 90% of the entire modal share.

Smaller municipal settings, isolated heritage sites, or coastal and island communities—such as *Almerijazz* in Almería city, the *Menorca Jazz Festival* in Ciutadella, or *Jazzahara* in Zahara de los Atunes—have an exceptionally high rate of local attendees arriving on foot, with walking accounting for 45% to 67% of the total share. This possibly reveals a distinct "tourist-walker" pattern where off-island or international visitors travel long distances to reach the region but choose central accommodations, completely eliminating the need for a car to reach the venue. In contrast, another significant segment of local residents still chooses to drive short distances within their own town (such as 35% of local Ciutadella residents driving to concerts). It merits more research to understand what is behind that – either habits, convenience, or other barriers (not everyone can walk even medium distances, especially if the terrain is not even, etc.).

Relying on private car transport increases to between 60% and 100% of the non-local audience for events hosted outside primary transport networks or festivals drawing an expansive regional audience across a province, such as *Nigrán Jazz* in Pontevedra, the *Festival Fifty Fifty* in Asturias, or *Ultramar Club* in Girona, At the *Festival Fifty Fifty*, while 75% of immediate Avilés residents walked, 85% to 100% of attendees from the wider Asturian triangle (Gijón, Oviedo) and neighbouring Cantabria relied entirely on cars. This regional transport gap frequently results in a combined model, such as the "car + walk" pattern seen at *Ultramar Club* (40%), where attendees drive from neighbouring towns to the municipal periphery and complete the journey on foot, possibly due to a lack of urban parking spots or other constraints.

2.3.3 Audience Mobility Case Study: Ireland

In Ireland, empirical data collected from a series of concerts and workshops reveals distinct audience mobility patterns across 6 tours with 29 unique events. These are split between metropolitan centres—including city-centric workshops and urban hubs like *The Cooler* (Dublin) and *DCU*—and regional venues and events, including *Westport Jazz*, *Limerick Jazz*, *Triskel* (Cork), *Hawk's Well*, *Kildare Jazz*, *Bray*, and *Tinahely*. The audience data was captured in a grid that contained various modes of transport (bikes, walking, car, etc.) and segmented distance brackets (0-5, 5-15, 15-50 km, etc.).

Audience Mobility Typology

Audiences attending events in metropolitan areas with dense urban settings, such as the concerts at *The Cooler* or *DCU* in Dublin, show a clear preference for public transport and active mobility (walking and cycling) for short distances between 0 and 5 km. However, the use of private cars increases significantly for attending events hosted outside of primary transport networks or regional concerts drawing audiences across wider provincial catchments, such as those hosted in Limerick and Westport. For any journey exceeding 5 km, the private car remains the overwhelmingly dominant mode of transport, heavily outweighing all other modes combined for mid-range distances between 5 km and 50 km. This most likely refers to a regional public transport gap, highlighting a notable structural challenge for cross-town travel. A lack of viable late-night public transport alternatives during event hours locks regional attendees into car dependency.

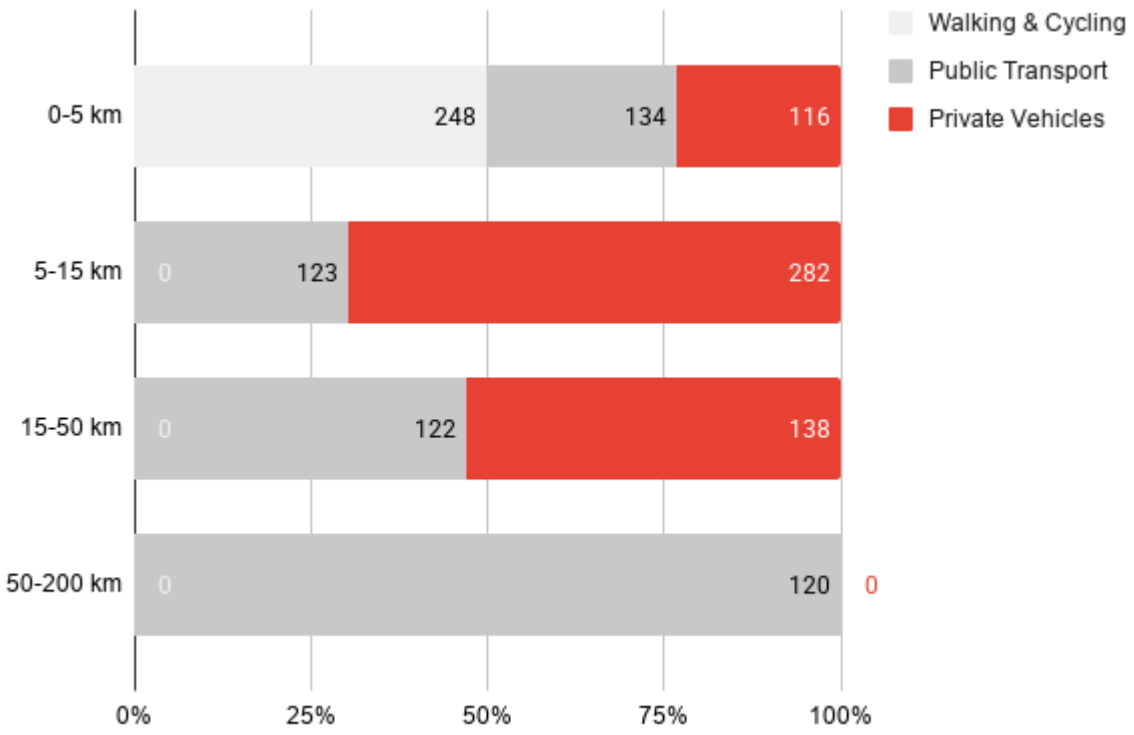

Figure 13. Audience travel broken down by the relative shares of modes of transport. Aggregated over 29 events in Ireland.

2.3.4 Some takeaways

Even though the Better Live case studies use very different methods and volumes of data than the Landscape study, they seem to back up the core findings of it.

Both approaches show that the scale of an event dictates how far people travel. Small club events, local workshops, and small city-centre venues naturally achieve a low-carbon footprint because they draw audiences almost entirely from their immediate neighbourhoods on foot, by bicycle, or via local transport. Conversely, when an event gets larger or features major international artists, the local audience share drops and the catchment area expands, driving up travel distances and overall emissions.

The data across all three countries also highlights the same issue: car reliance for regional travel. The Landscape study showed that cars take a 91% share of regional trips in France, while the Better Live data shows car reliance climbing to between 60% and 100% for non-local attendees in Spain and Ireland. Furthermore, the Landscape study found that 41% of all tracked car journeys were under 5 km. This pattern is mirrored in the Spanish and Irish samples, where local residents regularly choose to drive short distances to venues that–at least by pure distance–might be well within walking or cycling distance. Here context matters, of course, and more research is needed to determine more nuanced factors.

The main difference between the two research methods lies in how they interpret long-distance travel. The ticketing data in the Landscape study flags long journeys from 2000

km as distortions that inflate a venue's footprint, questioning whether to include them if the concert was just a side activity during a broader holiday. The Better Live survey data adds useful context here by identifying "tourist-walkers". This shows that while international or off-island tourists create high emissions to reach a region, they often don't use cars once there by staying in central accommodation and walking to the venue.

Ultimately, the Better Live case studies show that individual green awareness is not enough. Meaningful carbon reduction cannot rely on voluntary audience choices alone. However, there are several distinct problems and opportunities bundled into the complex outcome of audience mobility. When it comes to the shortest distances, there might be many approaches to try to incentivise audiences to use public transport or walk, whether making sure that the public transport actually runs at the needed times, or restricting parking spots and making arriving by a car more uncomfortable.

However, the medium distances of approximately 50km which are usually overwhelmingly travelled by cars raise questions: is there anything meaningful to be done about it? Organising more public transport might not be feasible for the municipal public authorities nor the concert organisers. A broadly dispersed catchment area is unlikely to work for carpooling solutions at a useful scale.

It is a possibility that no significant carbon reduction avenues exist for audiences traveling such distances and the footprint is inevitable. It then raises the question whether there should or could be more, but smaller events that would provide concert opportunities for more audiences closer to where they live. One theme that needs further analysis is to what degree is there an industry and or policy-driven need to grow events. Music tourism focused on concerts is an important and most likely a growing area of business that can appeal to not only the promoters who can catch more audiences, but also to local municipalities where such events might be held as they attract tourist spending. It is the nature of market dynamics that if some drive up the competition for audiences others might have to follow simply to stay alive. From the perspective of carbon footprint, this might be a vicious circle.

2.4 Programming diversity

The Better Live experimental tours confirm that programming diversity and environmental sustainability do not have to be a zero-sum game. While conventional touring models often rely on one-off international flights that drive up the carbon footprint per concert, the co-programming framework demonstrates that structuring longer, regionally dense tour itineraries allows organisers to maintain — and perhaps even enhance — geographical diversity without a runaway climate cost.

Due to the limited scale of Better Live tours a comparative analysis of shifting shares of international vs regional or local artists is not possible. The figure below maps the average share of artist origins across all participating venues within each Local Action Group (LAG), based on expert estimations. These are local expert estimations rather than results of careful calculations. Also, the categories are methodologically fuzzy in order to be flexible and were defined in the project blueprint report as follows:

- **Local**: based on the same city or locality within a specific km radius or the area served by local transport.

- **Regional** (Intra-LAG): based in the same Local Action Group (LAG). This may mean within national or regional borders, or across borders in neighboring countries/regions, and is defined specifically for each LAG.
- **International** (Extra-LAG): from outside of the LAG, which generally means from another country, but can sometimes include far-away regions of the same country.

LAG boundaries were not rigidly fixed and in some cases spanned across borders to include other countries.

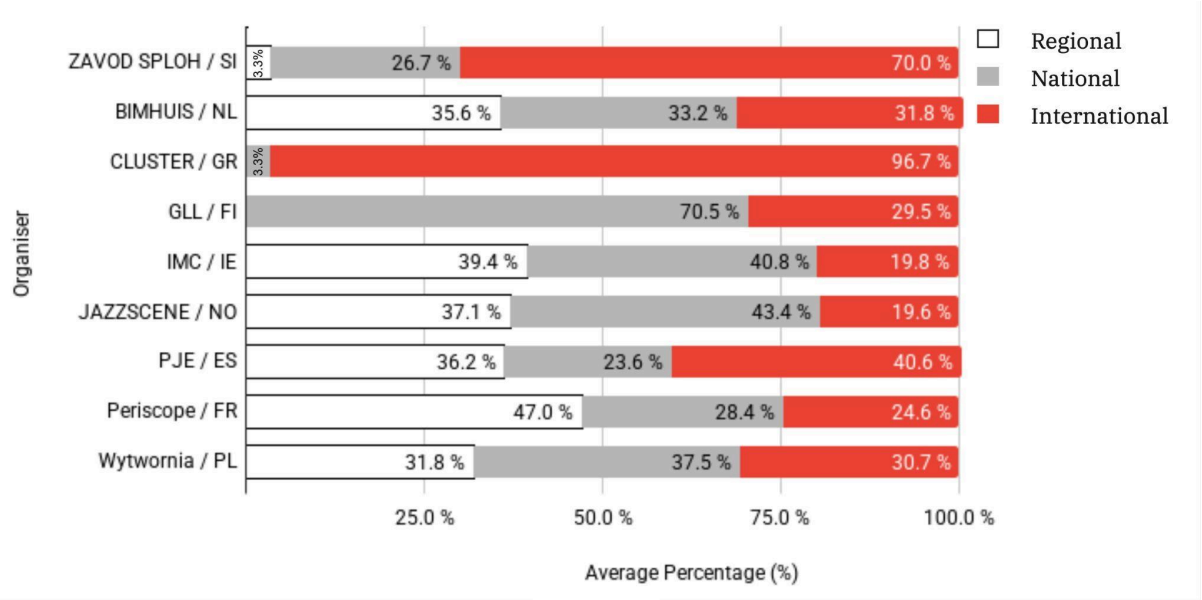

Figure 14. The average share of artist origin across all venues in a LAG. Expert estimations.

The data highlights a highly varied baseline of internationalisation across European regions, heavily influenced by local geography and infrastructure. For example, land-connected or centrally located networks like Periscope in France (47% local) or the Improvised Music Company (IMC) in Ireland (39.4% local) naturally maintain a more balanced mix of national and international talent. However, highly isolated or peripheral networks show extreme polarisation. Cluster in Greece relies almost entirely on international bookings (96.7%), while G Live Lab Tampere in Finland shows a strong reliance on a domestic core (70.5%).

3. Environmental Sustainability in the Music Sector and Policy – Six Case Studies

The second part of the research focused on two themes, drawing qualitative data from six case study countries: Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Spain. The themes the policy landscape covered in chapter 3 and music sector actor perspectives in chapter 4.

Mapping and analysing the convergence of the themes of environmental sustainability (ES) and cultural practices at the policy level must focus on two different points: (1) how the ES theme is integrated into cultural policies; and (2) how culture as a (group of) sector(s) is integrated into the broader ES policy. For these case studies main policy documents were reviewed, including culture policy strategies, programmes, reports, and websites. Also, 20 interviews were conducted with 14 policy actors (on in writing) and 6 ecology experts. In

addition, a brief outline is provided of some of the more relevant EU regulations that do or might do in the future have implications for the music sector.

Footprints and handprints

There are two different perspectives when culture and environmental sustainability are addressed on the policy level. One focuses on the carbon footprint and the issues of "greening" the cultural sector(s). The other is about the role of the arts and culture having a potentially specific and, according to some, even special role in driving the ecological transformation in the society at large. This is often referred to as the handprint. These themes can be noted in policy as well as sectoral initiatives.

The blurring of "sustainability" dimensions

Cultural policy strategies frame and address issues mostly on a very high level of abstraction. It is unhelpful, therefore, for the reader – though strategically useful for the authors – that the concept of sustainability has been extended from its original environmental context to also include social and economic dimensions with ongoing debates about the need for also having culture as the fourth dimension in the UNESCO framework of sustainable development. The equivocal use of the sustainability term in cultural policy strategies goes often with little specification what is meant by it and which dimension it even refers to.

3.1 The Impact of European Union Sustainability Frameworks on the Music Sector

While the European Union does not possess a direct mandate to regulate music or dictate national cultural policy, its horizontal environmental and sustainability rules increasingly reshape the landscape for cultural actors. Live music operations—from local venues and large-scale festivals to individual touring artists and booking agents—are bound by broad economic, structural, and environmental safety regulations. These frameworks apply to music infrastructure either directly through legislative transposition by member states or indirectly via the commercial supply chains that connect independent venue managers, promoters, or technical service providers with major corporate entities. Understanding these horizontal regulations allows music sector stakeholders to anticipate shifts in procurement requirements, venue management standards, and event production conditions across Europe.

3.1.1 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)

The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (Directive (EU) 2022/2464)[18] significantly expands European requirements for non-financial transparency, putting sustainability reporting on an equal footing with standard financial auditing.

Scope and Limitations

The directive applies to all large companies listed or unlisted on EU regulated markets that meet at least two of the three following criteria on their balance sheet dates: an average of more than 250 employees during the financial year, a net turnover exceeding €50 million, or a

[18] Official details regarding implementation timelines and compliance guidelines are maintained on the European Commission CSRD Policy Page, while the full statutory text is available via EUR-Lex Directive (EU) 2022/2464.

balance sheet total exceeding €25 million. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are largely exempt from direct reporting burdens or face highly simplified, voluntary regimes.

Application to the Music Sector

- **Direct impact:** the directive directly captures multinational live entertainment promoters, large-scale arena management firms, major festival consortiums, and global record labels operating within the EU. These entities must formally audit and disclose their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impacts (such companies include CTS Eventim, Universal Music Group, and Live Nation's European subsidiaries).

- **Indirect impact**: to fulfil their reporting mandates, major corporations must evaluate their overall value chain, creating an indirect ripple effect across the music ecosystem. However, under new EU rules introducing the "value chain cap"[19], smaller independent companies are legally protected from heavy reporting burdens. For the first three years, large companies can use industry averages instead of demanding complex, custom data from small suppliers. Smaller companies hold a legal right to refuse excessive data requests, and corporate promoters are directed to use general industry estimates to calculate value-chain (Scope 3) emissions. Even with these legal protections, smaller music actors might in the future face shifting expectations from their commercial partners. As major corporations establish long-term emission targets, their procurement processes will increasingly favour business partners that can easily provide simple carbon metrics, turning sustainability transparency into a market-driven competitive edge rather than a statutory obligation.

3.1.2. Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)

Entering into force as a key element of the European Green Deal's Circular Economy Action Plan, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1781)[20] establishes a comprehensive framework to control how products are designed, manufactured, and managed throughout their lifecycle.

Scope and Limitations

The regulation applies to nearly all physical goods placed on the EU market, explicitly setting performance and information standards to maximize product durability, repairability, and recyclability. Micro-enterprises and small creative operations receive specific exemptions from certain administrative burdens, such as the initial bans on destroying unsold goods.

Application to the Music Sector

- **Music hardware and electronics**. The European Commission prioritises high-impact categories like steel, aluminium, and core consumer electronics. Professional audio gear, musical instruments, and staging backline have not yet been assigned a specific working group or delegated act. While long-term premium audio brands like Bang &

[19] The statutory "value chain cap" was introduced via the Omnibus I Directive package. See more: https://shiftproject.org/shift-statement-on-the-political-agreement-on-the-omnibus-simplification-package-on-eu-sustainability-due-diligence-and-reporting-rules/.

[20] Ongoing updates on product group working plans are available on the European Commission ESPR Policy Page, and the framework mechanism can be accessed at EUR-Lex Regulation (EU) 2024/1781.

Olufsen or Transparent are proactively experimenting with modular, repairable designs to prepare for future horizontal rules[21], no music-specific hardware standard or mandatory digital passport currently exists.

- **Tour merchandising and textiles**. While the EU passed a strict ban on destroying unsold clothes and footwear that will take effect on 19 July 2026, the law explicitly exempts micro and small businesses. Because most band merchandise operations, independent labels, and touring acts are small operations, they are legally untouched by this ban. Medium-sized merchandise or festival companies receive a temporary six-year exemption, meaning they will eventually have to comply.

3.1.3 Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD)

The Single-Use Plastics Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/904)[22] specifically targets the ten plastic items most frequently identified on European coastlines to mitigate marine and terrestrial littering.

Scope and Limitations

The directive applies directly to specific commercial single-use items where affordable, sustainable alternative materials are readily available in the internal market, enforcing outright market bans on products such as plastic cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, and food or beverage containers made of expanded polystyrene. Conversely, for items without immediate market substitutes, it mandates substantial consumption reductions and separate collection targets, requiring Member States to significantly reduce the use of plastic beverage cups and take-away food boxes, while enforcing a 90% separate collection target for single-use plastic bottles by 2029.[23]

Application to the Music Sector

- **Festival and venue catering**: national laws based on the SUPD are the main reason festival bars and food stalls must change how they serve food and drinks. These national rules require them to phase out plastic cups, food containers, straws, and cutlery at outdoor events and concert halls, with some countries banning single-use plastics entirely.

- **Operational shift**: to comply with national laws stemming from this directive, event promoters and venue operators must transition entirely to circular alternatives. Field studies tracking waste management models at major European festivals demonstrate the necessity of this shift, documenting that artificial polymers might constitute over 90% of all litter items generated during short-duration outdoor music events.[24] Evaluations of circular implementation confirm that transitioning from open, single-use bars and food stalls to reusable deposit-refund cup networks or non-refundable

[21] This shift is clear from the companies' own public design plans and product manuals: Bang & Olufsen states that its core speakers use a simple, screw-in computer chip that can be swapped out when technology updates to make the product last for decades, while the Swedish audio brand Transparent publishes design guides showing how its products are built with unglued, modular parts so customers can easily take them apart to repair or upgrade them at home.
[22] Comprehensive guidance documents on specific product descriptions are found on the European Commission Single-Use Plastics Policy Page, and the binding text is located at EUR-Lex Directive (EU) 2019/904.
[23] More information: https://www.ecosistant.eu/en/directive-eu-2019904-single-use-plastic-and-labeling-requirements/.
[24] Teixeira et al., 2026; // Teixeira, Z., Cunha, A., Carvalho, P. C. S., & Laranjeira, S. (2026). Stratifying the shoreline: A modified OSPAR framework to monitor event-driven beach litter. Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, 198(5), Article 433. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-026-15260-x

eco-fees vastly improves material recovery rates, directly altering the logistics of festival procurement and vendor contract management.[25] Real-world applications of these circular systems are already standard practice across major European events, using token-based recovery models to eliminate waste at the bars[26] or automated digital infrastructure to handle high-volume crowd returns.[27]

3.2 Finland

In Finland, as in other Nordic countries, the overall awareness and salience of the theme of ecological transition is high among the general society, the cultural professionals as well as policy makers. There are many outstanding initiatives driven from sector actors that have also engaged policy levels and funding. However, a more systematic policy approach is only gradually emerging.

Addressing artist and audience mobility in Finland requires appreciating the context. Finland is a large country geographically and especially in the North sparsely populated. While public transport is in general very well developed, avoiding flying or using cars is not always feasible due to the distances. The journey from Helsinki on the south coast to Rovaniemi in the north is more than 820 km and takes about 8 hours by train, between 9-10 with a car, and more than 11 hours by bus. Connecting to the rest of Europe and the world is also very difficult to conceive without flying.

3.2.1 Institutional and policy landscape

Cultural policy in Finland is in the governance domain of the **Ministry of Education and Culture** (*Opetus- ja Kulttuuriministeriö,* ***OKM***). OKM funds directly National Cultural Institutions[28] and through a statutory framework[29] a number of cultural organisations, most importantly for music symphonic and other orchestras and choirs. The local government (*Kunnat*) are also an important cultural policy operator. They co-fund statutory cultural institutions alongside the central government and provide local subsidies and operational spaces for arts organisations, music schools, and community festivals. Project-based support to the independent actors[30] was until 2025 provided by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike)[31] which in the beginning of 2026 merged into the newly founded Finnish Arts and Culture Agency (KUVI)[32].

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[25] Šuškevičė & Kruopienė, 2021 // Šuškevičė, V., & Kruopienė, J. (2021). Improvement of packaging circularity through the application of reusable beverage cup reuse models at outdoor festivals and events. Sustainability, 13(1), Article 247. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010247

[26] For example, the Brussels-based festival Couleur Café eliminates loose cup litter by using an integrated eco-token system in partnership with reusable packaging providers like Rekwup, where attendees receive a physical token upon entry that must be exchanged at bars alongside their drink orders to avoid financial deductions from their festival allowance. See: https://www.couleurcafe.be/en/practical/reusable-cups.

[27] Similarly, events facing high-volume electronic music crowds, such as Germany's Fairground Festival, use automated infrastructure from circular tech firms like Tomra Reuse; this "Throw'n'Go" system features RFID-chipped reusable cups that instantly refund a €2 deposit back to the attendee's digital wallet when dropped into automated return stations. See: https://www.tomra.com/news-and-media/news/2025/tomra-reuse-keeps-the-beats-clean-at-fairground-festival-2025

[28] These include The National Gallery, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, and the Finnish National Theatre.

[29] The State Subsidy System (VOS or *Valtionosuusjärjestelmä*) is the statutory central government funding mechanism used to co-finance regional and municipal cultural institutions. Rather than receiving discretionary project grants, qualified orchestras, theatres, dance companies, and circus groups are allocated long-term, predictable operational funding based on calculated person-years (*henkilötyövuodet*), which are paired with specific unit prices to cover standard operating expenses.

[30] The independent actors are referred to in Finnish as *vapaakenttä*, which translates as the “free scene”.

[31] Operating under the Ministry of Education and Culture, Taike as an arm’s length expert body was responsible for the national and regional promotion of the arts until the end of 2025. It historically administered project grants, artist pensions, and working subsidies to independent artists, groups, and projects.

[32] Finnish Arts and Culture Agency (KUVI / *Taide- ja kulttuurivirasto*) as the new centralised state agency started operations on January 1st, 2026. It combines the functions of the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) and the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), but preserves previous funding and support services for independent artists and creative networks.

In 2025, OKM produced a new **Cultural Policy Report** which was ratified in the Parliament in October 2025. It was followed by an **implementation plan** in early 2026.[33] While the themes of environmental sustainability (ES) are present in these documents only on the most general level, they have been further developed in some sectoral strategies, such as for the architecture, cultural heritage, and cultural tourism sectors. There are no sectoral ES strategies for arts fields such as music.

However, the ministry has been supportive of sectoral initiatives and funded[34] for example the **Elma Live** – a digital platform that provides information, tools, and a community space to help the live music and performing arts sectors adopt sustainable practices in their daily operations (see more under sectoral initiatives). Another notable initiative has been **LuoTo**, led by a local government body and engaging the cultural sectors (see more in 3.1.2).

3.2.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

Cultural Policy

The general audience and cultural professionals care about culture's role in the ecological transition and many festival organisers and venue managers also feel that audiences expect them to act responsibly. Thus, many bottom-up sectoral initiatives have been created. Integrating ES into cultural policy, however, is only gradually catching up. The Cultural Policy Report mentions ES in only the most general way, noting that one of the aims of cultural policy is to "build an ecologically, socially, economically and culturally sustainable future" and that the CCIs "play a key role in global cooperation aimed at promoting sustainability and a sustainable lifestyle".[35] The term "sustainability" is used fairly often, but it mostly remains unspecified which dimension it refers to – whether environmental, social, or economic. In some cases it seems to be more about economic and perhaps social sustainability, as when the report notes that the "the cultural and creative industries' potential to accelerate sustainable growth and competitiveness has not been sufficiently exploited in Finland".[36]

Among the nine measures of the report, one is dedicated to enabling regeneration, sustainability and growth. Under this heading, the report notes that "funding and support will be available at different stages of the value chain to support the regeneration, sustainability and increasing international scope of the cultural and creative industries"[37], however, in the rest of the section it also seems to be mainly aimed at the social and economic dimensions rather than environmental.

As part of the common policy approaches section, the report notes that "practical measures for promoting culture in the context of sustainability will be drawn up as part of the national sustainable development strategy 2022–2030 and the national implementation of Agenda 2030, and cultural perspectives will be integrated into climate policy and biodiversity safeguarding measures".[38]

[33] Links to the report as well as the implementation plan can be found here: https://okm.fi/en/the-cultural-policy-report.
[34] The funding was a part of the Recovery and Resilience Facility during the later years of the COVID crisis.
[35] OKM (2025). The Cultural Policy Report, p. 10 and 21 respectively.
[36] OKM (2025), p. 20.
[37] OKM (2025), p. 30.
[38] OKM (2025), p. 33.

The implementation plan introduces only a few further details with regards to the ES dimension in culture. Under the section on measures, the plan reconfirms that measures will be developed to promote culture as part of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Also, monitoring methods will be developed to demonstrate the contribution of culture to sustainable development and adaptation to climate change and practices will be created for maintaining sustainability tools developed in the cultural and creative sectors and for developing and sharing sustainability expertise. Both action lines are scheduled for 2026.[39]

Gathering information on ES approaches from the sector

While the texts of the Cultural Policy report and the implementation plan remain laconic on the topic of ES, there is much interest and concern within the OKM and its institutions towards the questions of greening the sectors and the role of culture in the overall ecological transition. OKM requires the national cultural institutions and those receiving statutory funding to clarify how they work with ES themes in their yearly plans. While there is no rigorous evaluation of what is presented and it does not influence the funding decisions, it does provide the ministry with valuable insights into how the beneficiaries address these themes. The scope is wide. Some institutions are leading the way while others have to consider their limited capacity to tackle such themes in addition to their day-to-day survival.

Also the Arts Promotion Centre Finland, now part of Finnish Arts and Culture Agency, started in the past years to add questions relating to environmental responsibility to their funding applications for artists and cultural organisations. No eco-conditionality has been implemented in funding decisions. Rather it is part of gathering contextual information about the sector actors' views on these themes and mapping the real opportunities and challenges.

It is important to see this in the broader context – while the cultural policy strategies are rhetorically ambitious and look further in the future, in reality the cultural sector in Finland has seen severe cuts over the past years and such austerity is likely to continue in the near future.

LuoTo Report and Resources

Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis and an action plan for ecological transition in the cultural and creative sectors is the "LuoTo" project and report.[40] It lists many principles for working more environmentally sustainably with, by, and in the cultural sectors. It is very useful in harmonising sustainability vocabulary in different fields and aggregating existing green toolkits. It is practical in some of its guidance, but remains fairly abstract in others. For example, it highlights the need to consider sustainability aspects as part of eligibility criteria when designing mobility grants, but does not spell out a practical approach to doing it. Still, the project is a great example of a broad-based coalition, led by municipal organisations, that has done both in-depth field work as well as maintaining a website of useful resources.

One of the key themes of the LuoTo report is the special potential of arts and culture to drive the sustainability transition through a positive environmental handprint. Rather than solely focusing on reducing the sector's carbon footprint, the report emphasises how cultural and

[39] OKM (2026), p. 32.
[40] The report "Fostering sustainability. Action plan for ecological transition in cultural and creative sectors", referred to as the LuoTo project, was published in December 2023 by a consortium led by the Regional Council of Uusimaa (Uudenmaan liitto), Sitra, and the Ministry of Education and Culture. This action plan outlines the roadmap for the ecological transition of the Finnish creative sectors toward a low-carbon, circular economy. It maps out current sustainability challenges and provides cross-sectoral recommendations to integrate climate targets directly into funding criteria and everyday artistic operations. Report and other resources are available at https://luoto.art/en/.

creative sectors can act as societal “accelerators”, shaping cultural values and normalising low-carbon, circular lifestyles. It also brings examples from music, highlighting how well-known artists can act as powerful role models to inspire sustainable behavior across millions of listeners.

3.2.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

The intersection of cultural policy and broader national sustainability frameworks in Finland shows how the creative sector is integrated into cross-sectoral goals, though the approach splits between high-level rhetoric and narrow operational tasks. At the macro-policy level, Finland’s Voluntary National Review 2025[41] incorporates culture primarily through the concept of the environmental handprint, positioning it as an instrument for sustainability transformation. The framework places "human capital and culture" alongside environmental and economic pillars, arguing that systemic ecological change requires deep adjustments in shared societal values, norms, and lifestyles.

However, this high-level embedding of culture in sustainable development policy remains mostly abstract and rhetorical. While national documents explicitly recognise the capacity of arts and culture to drive the sustainability transition by shaping public attitudes, they so far offer few concrete policy measures, indicators, or funding tools to realise this potential. Instead, the strategic discourse relies on the sector's self-directed leadership and voluntary engagement with sustainability transition, without establishing clear state-led implementation mechanisms, at least as of now. It is understandable as the National Committee of Sustainable Development is more of a steering group and does not have its own budget. Still, it is already notable that cultural sector representatives are part of the National Committee and can represent the concerns and potential of cultural sectors in these discussions.

When national policy moves toward more operational, concrete tasks, the conceptualisation of culture narrows significantly. Within the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan until 2030,[42] operational measures are restricted to the domains of cultural heritage and the "cultural environment". In this context, the policy focus shifts away from contemporary arts or live performance fields, instead treating culture primarily as physical assets to be protected from environmental risks. Operational action lines—such as building administrative competence, conducting impact assessments, and improving data interoperability—are designed around tangible heritage sites and the built environment. While the plan notes a critical lack of baseline research on how climate change affects intangible cultural heritage, the concrete policy actions remain tethered to physical architecture and geographic landscapes, leaving a notable gap in how broader contemporary cultural practices fit into statutory climate adaptation frameworks.

The lack of operational measures can possibly be closed if the commitments of the Cultural Policy Report and the implementation plan to integrate culture into the national sustainability plans and policies are carried out in 2026 as indicated.

[41] Prime Minister's Office (2025). Progress towards shared wellbeing of people and planet. Voluntary National Review 2025 FINLAND, Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
[42] Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2024). Government Report on Finland’s National Climate Change Adaptation Plan until 2030. Wellbeing, Safety and Security in a Changing Climate.

3.2.4 Sectoral initiatives

While the policy landscape is gradually learning about and probing for a suitable role in the ecological transition of culture, the sector itself has many initiatives that serve as frontrunners mobilising attention, energy, and also political and financial capital.

Elma Live

The Elma Live initiative was launched in autumn 2022 by a network of Finnish music organisations to guide event organisers, artists, and venues toward sustainability. Based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the platform helps users address environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability. It offers educational materials, a tool for creating and tracking custom sustainability programmes, a community forum for sharing knowledge, and a carbon footprint calculator. The initiative aims to standardise eco-friendly and responsible practices across the creative industries through wide-ranging cooperation and practical, accessible tools.

Cool Music (Viileä Musiikki)

The Cool Music initiative is a climate action project for the Finnish live music sector, managed by the Finnish Jazz Federation and backed by major national music organisations. Aligned with Finland's 2035 carbon neutrality target, the initiative provides a shared climate roadmap to help artists, festivals, venues, and orchestras reduce their environmental footprint. It focuses on four key action areas: improving transport and logistics, adopting fossil-free and energy-saving practices, promoting responsible consumption through the circular economy, and leveraging the industry's cultural influence to inspire broader societal change. Industry operators participate by exploring these guidelines, formally pledging to achieve the shared climate goals, and implementing sustainable practices in their daily operations.

Eco-compass (Ekokompassi)

Ekokompassi is a practical environmental management system and certificate widely used across the Finnish cultural and events sectors. It acts as a hands-on toolkit rather than an abstract strategy, requiring organisations to conduct a baseline environmental audit, appoint an internal supervisor, and deliver a concrete action plan updated every year. The system focuses on very operational targets like reducing waste, improving material efficiency, and greening procurement choices. Its impact is visible across the music field; for example, the Finnish Jazz Federation uses it to structure its green touring frameworks,[43] while major independent events like the World Village Festival (*Maailma kylässä*) and the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival[44] rely on it to mandate strict waste sorting and force environmental standards onto their commercial subcontractors.

3.3 France

In France, the theme of ecological transition carries high social salience and is reflected in a shift in both public sentiment and cultural consumption. The general public has a high awareness of the ecological transition, largely because environmental themes have become a regular part of popular culture and mainstream media. Major commercial successes, such as

[43] More information: https://jazzliitto.fi/en/about/responsibility/ and https://jazzliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Jazz-Federations-EcoCompass-2022.pdf.
[44] More information: https://kuhmofestival.fi/en/sustainability/.

eco-themed films and best-selling graphic novels like *Le monde sans fin*, have normalised the topic, creating a strong expectation among audiences for green practices at cultural events.

Within this macro-policy context established through the National Low-Carbon Strategy (SNBC)[45], the cultural sector accounts for an estimated 2% of national greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to 12 million tonnes of CO2. To address this, the French Ministry of Culture created a specialised task force which has gradually produced a comprehensive framework—the Action and Cooperation Framework for Ecological Transformation (CACTÉ)—designed to both require and facilitate a low-carbon trajectory across the cultural sector.

3.3.1 Institutional and policy landscape

French cultural policy is historically centralised in Paris, but it functions through a mix of national public agencies and regional offices. At the top, the Ministry of Culture sets the main strategic goals and distributes the national budget. On the ground, these policies are managed locally by regional cultural directorates called DRACs (*Directions régionales des affaires culturelles*). The DRACs work directly with local venues, festivals, and projects to ensure they align with public funding goals. In addition, local and municipal authorities have a say in funding, often using five-year regional agreements to link cultural grants to local environmental and social development plans. This dual system connects large national institutions with independent, project-based music organisations.

This territorial structure formally spans five distinct administrative layers—national, regional, departmental, metropolitan, and municipal—all of which maintain independent cultural competencies. Although statutory adjustments in 2022 designated the regional tier as the central body responsible for organising these overlapping competencies, practical implementation is frequently restricted to technical and political data-sharing. Historically, these fragmented layers operated with minimal cross-sectoral visibility; it was the acute emergency of the COVID-19 crisis that explicitly forced these administrative levels to cooperate and map out local cultural provision to prevent systemic gaps. Within this hierarchy, the European Metropolis (*Métropole*) functions as the newest administrative layer. Because it must fit into an already crowded ecosystem, its cultural policy is inherently gap-driven, deliberately targeting public resources toward territorial areas, networks, and cooperative structures that are bypassed by the State or individual municipalities.

For the music sector, the main institution is the National Music Centre (*Centre national de la musique*, CNM). Created as a public agency under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, the CNM acts as the central coordinator and funding body for the entire music ecosystem, covering live performance, recorded music, and music publishing. The CNM is funded by a combination of government subsidies and the professional tax levied on live music ticket sales as well as streaming platforms. Rather than just passing out grants, the CNM acts as a sector referee. It uses its financial power to set standard requirements for the industry. By updating its General Aid Regulations, the CNM turns broad government environmental goals into practical, mandatory conditions that music businesses and non-profits must meet to receive financial support.

[45] More information at the dedicated website of the French Government: Stratégie nationale bas-carbone (SNBC).

3.3.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

Cultural policy and ecological transitions are co-steered by the Ministry of Culture, national sector-specific operators, and decentralised local authorities. The French state's approach to the ecological transition in culture is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture through two core initiatives: the Orientation and Inspiration Guide for the Ecological Transition of Culture (2023) and the Action and Cooperation Framework for Ecological Transformation (CACTÉ, 2025). The Orientation Guide sets the strategic direction for a sustainable model for the cultural sectors. Administratively, this strategy is steered by a very small, specialised central team of five to six people within the Ministry of Culture dedicated solely to cross-cutting ecological transition across all disciplines.

Orientation and Inspiration Guide for the Ecological Transition of Culture

Through the Orientation Guide, the ministry targets its intervention via three primary levers of action:

1) Data Collection and Carbon Assessments
The strategy emphasises the need for shared baselines across the many different types of cultural operators and specific carbon benchmarks were developed. The overarching target mandates that by 2027, 100% of cultural players must actively measure the ecological impact of their events or productions. To bridge the gap for low-capacity or smaller entities, the ministry has launched a sector-wide ecological self-diagnosis questionnaire. This digital tool allows small cultural structures and independent companies to evaluate their ecological maturity and design tailored transition action plans. Additionally, the ministry is actively testing environmental impact measurement tools within cultural structures, supporting their wider deployment as these systems become standardised.

2) Financing the Ecological Transition
Several sources of funding were foreseen to subsidise the decarbonisation of culture. These included Fonds Vert (Green Fund) dedicating €40 million from inter-ministerial funds to the ecological transition was earmarked for the cultural sector to modernise aging facilities and national establishments; and Alternatives Vertes (Green Alternatives) operating under the broader France 2030 investment umbrella and committing to fully support green innovations with all of the €25 million allocated to its second phase.

The targeted financing also comes with commitments. By 2027, for example, all official institutional strategic documents must include appropriate ecological targets and all financial aid and grants allocated by the Ministry of Culture must require compliance with ecological commitments tailored to the specific operational realities of each sector.

3) Training and Professional Development
The ministry treats professional training as a prerequisite for sector-wide change. The strategy sets a progressive timeline to roll out training, starting with central government supervisory staff already in 2024 to ensure they can evaluate the ecological performance of subsidised entities. In the higher education sector, the framework requires that all standard pedagogical reference frameworks and curriculums structurally incorporate the ecological transition.

This training pillar involves initiating open dialogues with the Ministry of Education to develop green curriculums, expanding web-based informational resources, strengthening place-based research, and mobilising scientific expertise to support public policy. As an example of sector-specific reference tools, the National Music Centre (CNM) maintains a dedicated portal on its website that aggregates regional green initiatives, practical guides, available transition funding, and specialised training modules for music professionals.

* * *

The guide also introduces **five priority areas** for managing the ecological transition in all sectors of culture and the fifth is focused on **rethinking mobility** to ensure that culture remains accessible. This is also central for Better Live, as audience travel is the largest source of carbon emissions in live music and the performing arts at large, generating 45% of the carbon footprint for theatres, up to 75% for music festivals, and 90% for cinemas.

To address this challenge, the Ministry of Culture has set specific goals for the 2023–2027 cycle that include (1) reviewing its own business travel policies and significantly restricting the use of air transport for its agents; (2) obligating central and decentralised departments must draw up at least one formal regional contract with a public mobility operator to coordinate transit networks around cultural facilities; and (3) by 2027 75% of state-supported operators must introduce or study green pricing frameworks linked directly to the public's choice of low-carbon mobility, provided that the transport offering is pluralistic.

The priority area specifically addresses the issue of bringing cultural offerings closer to communities and thus limiting long-distance audience travel by funding and label rules that promote decentralised programming, encourage optimised touring, supporting in situ artist residencies, and building regional partnerships to provide sustainable local mobility.

Action and Cooperation Framework for Ecological Transformation" (CACTÉ)

The CACTÉ framework serves as the practical framework to turn the general guidelines and targets of the guide into practical ways of working for the sector. Instead of imposing rigid, abstract formulas, it is designed as a tool for dialogue, matching a single mandatory "methodological" commitment with ten flexible, thematic choices. Cultural operators use this structure to map out their own long-term pathways in agreement with their financial partners. At the end of a funding cycle, a mixed panel of peers, local authorities, and green experts reviews what has actually been achieved on the ground. Organisations are awarded a certification from Level 1 to Level 3, with an extra "+" badge given to those who weave environmental themes directly into their artistic programming and public educational work.
Across the wider cultural field, CACTÉ is mandatory for any production, distribution, or educational organisation holding a contract of three years or more with the Ministry of Culture. The goal is to embed sustainability naturally across everything from museums and archives to theatres and historic architecture. In practice, it means moving away from paperwork toward real operational changes: teams must build an action plan based on local contextual data, run environmental training for their staff, appoint a senior team member to lead the process, and build active green partnerships within their communities.

In the music sector specifically, CACTÉ is being used to reshape the heavy resource demands of both live performance and recorded music. The framework targets the industry's biggest emission sources by breaking actions down into practical, music-specific areas:

- **Live music and touring**. Venues and festivals use the framework to guide their choices on energy-efficient technical equipment, switch to sustainable vegetarian catering, and set up precise postcode tracking to understand audience travel. It also encourages smarter, shared regional tour routing to reduce the constant back-and-forth transit of artistic teams.
- **Recorded music and publishing.** Operators apply the guidelines to reduce data consumption on streaming platforms, improve energy efficiency in data hosting, and use sustainable or recycled materials in physical vinyl pressing. It also promotes local resource sharing, helping organisations set up regional material banks to reuse stage sets and infrastructure.

Decentralisation and Regional Policy Implementation

The practical application of French cultural policy relies heavily on a shared governance model between state institutions and local authorities. At the territorial level, national strategic directions are managed by the regional cultural directorates called DRACs (*Directions régionales des affaires culturelles*), which directly monitor and fund local venues, festivals, and projects. Local authorities operate through municipal bodies or groups of small towns called inter-communalities (*Intercommunalités*). These local authorities hold voluntary cultural competencies, allowing them to design specific local cultural frameworks funded jointly by regional bodies, the DRAC, and municipal budgets. This shared funding structure underpins decentralised infrastructure such as the specialised live music venues certified as SMACs (*Scènes de musiques actuelles*) and public networks for cinema and libraries.

On this local level, the policy agenda focuses primarily on geographical decentralisation, cultural mediation, and social inclusion. In rural territories and lower-income small towns, public funding is directed toward bringing artists into local communities through dedicated residencies, public workshops, and collaborative creations with residents. Rather than funding artistic creation in isolation, local inter-communalities subsidise cultural operators who combine artistic presentation with active social outreach, specifically targeting groups furthest from metropolitan cultural centres, such as students, hospital patients, and low-income families. To build local audiences, these regional policies favour long-term formats like community-based residency periods and decentralised touring networks where main arts festivals feed free, smaller performances directly into rural municipalities. To guide this work, the DRAC uses territorial cultural contracts (*Projets Culturels de Territoire*) and specific artistic education agreements (*Contrats Territoriaux d'Éducation Artistique et Culturelle*) to formalise funding priorities for isolated rural areas and priority urban neighbourhoods.

At the metropolitan level, this decentralised approach translates into funding dedicated networks rather than direct artistic programming. For example, metropolitan cultural departments use their financial resources to manage and connect networks of local structures, such as municipal libraries, music schools, and specialised contemporary music venues (SMACs) spread across dense urban clusters. Whilst cultural budgets at this metropolitan level remain small—frequently accounting for only 1% of total public

expenditure—the policy significance of the Metropolis lies in its direct statutory control over heavy public infrastructure, specifically public mobility, transit networks, and waste management. As a result, local cultural policy contributes to the ecological transition through inter-departmental negotiations to build bridges between cultural events and public transit systems. As an example from Lille – the cultural sector regularly produces and distributes a large volume of event programmes, including detailed transport access information on every leaflet. This can serve as free advertising for the public transit network. Furthermore, public authorities use audience surveys at venues to track travel routes, alongside behavioural studies that look closely at why some attendees choose individual cars over public transport. This research helps diagnose practical barriers to low-carbon travel, such as evening security concerns or the simple logistical difficulty of carrying large bags on the metro.

According to some interviews, however, a gap remains between centralised national ecological strategies and the local administrative reality. Local inter-communalities are not always informed about national policy initiatives in a timely manner. They instead manage the ecological transition through their own cross-cutting municipal environmental frameworks, such as the Territorial Climate-Air-Energy Plan (*Plan Climat-Air-Énergie Territorial*, PCAET). On the ground, regional sustainability measures focus on technical building efficiency, waste recycling schemes, and material reuse at local events.

This creates a structural mismatch between green criteria set on a national level and local funding mechanisms. While national policy and funding bodies demand that cultural operators meet strict environmental criteria to receive public grants, the actual financial tools at the regional level are restrictive. Specifically, DRAC funding rules dictate that territorial cultural subsidies can only cover artistic interventions and direct project costs, explicitly excluding the purchase of technical equipment or physical materials.

As a result, local operators face a policy disconnect: they have to meet greening criteria but are legally blocked from using their primary cultural subsidies (from DRAC) to fund the necessary physical changes, such as energy-efficient equipment upgrades or low-carbon infrastructure. To fund these investments, operators cannot rely on cultural policy instruments and must instead apply to entirely separate local environmental budgets and municipal climate plans, where specialised cultural needs like LED stage lighting must compete against general public works like school insulation. This means that while subsidised theatre and music companies face mandatory green rules from their cultural funding partners, the local government bodies managing the actual physical infrastructure operate independently of national cultural policy, driving local environmental upgrades through territorial climate plans rather than cultural directives.

The Role of the National Music Centre (CNM)

The CACTÉ framework is further backed by the National Music Centre (CNM), which has integrated these ecological guidelines directly into its financial support system, making environmental commitments a key condition for receiving public grants. The CNM is the main institution implementing ecological transition policy goals in the music sector. Under its 2025–2027 strategic roadmap[46], the CNM connects environmental goals directly with social factors like working conditions to ensure a fair and sustainable transition.

[46] CNM's roadmap can be found here: https://cnm.fr/communiques/feuille-de-route-dediee-transition-ecologique-et-innovation/.

This policy is enforced through the updated CNM General Aid Regulations (*Règlement Général des Aides*) introduced in January 2025. Rather than imposing strict eco-conditionality immediately, the CNM uses a system of "transformative criteria" consisting of clear yes-or-no questions regarding sustainability practices. Meeting a set number of these criteria gives music operators access to a financial bonus of up to 10% of the requested grant amount. Fully mandatory eco-conditionality is a separate policy line and is not anticipated before 2026 or 2027.

To help the sector meet these requirements, the CNM acts as an operational resource hub[47] that funds practical projects and manages diagnostic tools. It supports and helps fund the use of specific music-sector carbon calculators, including De-Click for data collection, Seeds, and the Fairly tool, which provides live music events with a specific eco-score. Through its dedicated project grants, the CNM funds the practical costs of transition projects, such as hiring sustainability consultants, investing in shared equipment, and establishing objective carbon measurements.[48] These initiatives are guided by the CNM's broader research into "carbon trajectories" up to 2030, which model how decarbonisation impacts daily industry operations based on sector-specific scenario studies like SPOT[49] and REC[50]. Alongside direct financial aid, the CNM operates a specialised Transitions and Innovation Unit that delivers professional training modules, publishes practical green guides, and coordinates with regional authorities to better align funding conditions across different territories.

Through these targeted mechanisms, the CNM acts as a partial bridge across the funding gap that exists at the regional DRAC level. While standard regional subsidies are legally restricted from funding purchasing physical assets, the CNM's dedicated project grants specifically fund physical transition costs, such as investments in shared, resource-efficient technical equipment. Furthermore, the specialised Transitions and Innovation Unit actively coordinates with regional decentralised authorities to align funding conditions across territories. This integration helps operators bypass the highly fragmented local application processes. However, while this national intervention provides vital financial relief for music operators, it does not fully resolve the underlying structural issue. The direct national subsidies from the CNM do not alter the fact that territorial infrastructure upgrades remain tethered to municipal climate plans (PCAET), where cultural investments must still compete against general public works.

3.3.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

In France, the cultural and creative sectors have been formally integrated into national decarbonisation targets of the National Low-Carbon Strategy (*Stratégie Nationale Bas-Carbone*)[51]. In this broad framework, culture is accounted for as an economic sector with its own carbon footprint, officially estimated to generate 2% of national greenhouse gas emissions, or 12 million tonnes of CO2.[52] Consequently, the green initiatives designed by the Ministry of Culture serve to directly meet these broader statutory emission targets.[53]

[47] More information: https://cnm.fr/focus/transition-ecologique/.
[48] More information: https://cnm.fr/aides-financieres/aide-aux-projets-en-faveur-de-la-transition-ecologique/.
[49] More information: https://cnmlab.fr/onde-longue/scenarios-prospectifs-pour-orienter-la-transition-spot/
[50] More information: https://cnm.fr/communiques/restitution-du-projet-rec-reduisons-notre-empreinte-carbone/
[51] More information: Stratégie nationale bas-carbone (SNBC)
[52] The Shift Project. (2021). Décarboner la culture! Rapport final sur les secteurs du spectacle vivant, du cinéma et des festivals. The Shift Project. Available: https://theshiftproject.org/app/uploads/2025/02/211130-TSP-PTEF-Rapport-final-Culture-v3.pdf
[53] Ministère de la Culture. (2023). Guide d'orientation et d'inspiration pour la transition écologique de la culture.

In general, the integration of culture into national ecological and climate policies is split between two distinct strategic roles. First, the cultural sectors can help raise public awareness to build a low-carbon consumption mindset – the handprint argument. At this level, the strategy relies on the arts and mainstream media to build what it defines as a shared "low-carbon culture" (*culture bas carbone*) across society to normalise patterns of “environmental sobriety”.[54] Second, more narrowly, the tangible historical heritage must be protected against climate risks and therefore public resources are designated for reinforcing historic buildings, mapping flood risks for museums, and securing architectural monuments against extreme weather.[55]

This dual approach on the macro-policy level leaves a structural gap regarding contemporary creative practices, as live music, touring logistics, and independent festivals are largely omitted from national climate risk management. However, these are addressed through the targeted approaches of the CACTÉ framework and, specifically for music, the CNM activities.

3.3.4 Sectoral Initiatives

The scale of grassroots and civil society action within the French music ecosystem makes a comprehensive overview of all environmental initiatives unfeasible in the scope of this study. Instead, a broader, regularly updated map of projects, resources, and institutional aids is maintained via the CNM’s dedicated ecological transition portal. Within the independent music scene, live operators, and contemporary music fields (*musiques actuelles*), several initiatives stand out for their collaborative, data-driven approaches and collective resources.

A good example of this operational shift is the Déclic project (*Dispositif d'Études de l'Empreinte Carbone pour les Lieux, l'Industrie et les Clubs*), a sector-specific decarbonisation framework designed specifically for contemporary music structures. Jointly steered by FEDELIMA (the federation of contemporary music venues) and the SMA (*Syndicat des musiques actuelles*), Déclic focuses on establishing standardised data-collection methods tailored for the music sector rather than relying on generic corporate carbon accounting. By conducting comprehensive carbon audits across representative independent structures—including concert halls, festivals, and production companies—the project enables independent operators to produce the precise baseline metrics and sector-wide benchmarks required by national funding bodies. This collective approach allows smaller live music venues to standardise data collection on audience mobility, technical setups, and artist transport without requiring the extensive administrative resources of larger metropolitan institutions.

Bottom-up initiatives extend to practical logistics and circular economy hubs, which have emerged directly from the independent sector to address the limitations of regional cultural funding. Because of the limited scope of regional subsidies, individual venues and festivals frequently struggle to fund green material upgrades independently. To circumvent this barrier, independent live operators can rely on regional material reuse centres, such as *La*

[54] République Française, 2020. Stratégie Nationale Bas-Carbone (SNBC): La feuille de route pour la neutralité carbone. Ministère de la Transition Écologique et Solidaire.
[55] Ministère de la Culture. (2025). Cadre d’Actions et de Coopération pour la Transformation Écologique (CACTÉ). République Française.

Ressourcerie Culturelle. These cooperative platforms allow small-scale operators to rent, share, and repair stage materials, technical gear, and event signage.

3.4 Ireland

The intersection of environmental sustainability and professional cultural practice in Ireland is marked by a tension between high public concern and the practical limitations of cultural funding and an island geography. Research by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shows that the vast majority of the Irish public is worried about the localised impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather and rising sea levels.[56] However, translating this into practical policy agenda and real-world change remains a challenge.

Historically, ecological actions within the Irish cultural sector relied on project-based, exploratory research or bottom-up civil society initiatives, as the impetus for climate engagement initially emerged from the sector itself rather than from institutional and policy levels. While this sector-led demand has recently been met with more structural policy design—underpinned by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which mandates a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and full climate neutrality by 2050—institutional efforts remain in an early, experimental phase. For independent cultural actors, in particular, tackling the climate impact of operations is currently a complex process of trial and error, often fraught with difficult trade-offs between ecological sustainability, artistic independence, and economic survival.[57]

Within this broader legislative context, the institutional response has been increasingly focused on using artistic, cultural, and creative practices to achieve specific, structural outcomes, positioning the cultural and creative sectors as transformative agents of change for a low-carbon society.[58] This focus is expressed in dedicated public funding models like the three editions of the Creative Climate Action Fund with the latest third round of €6.5 million announced in early 2026. In addition, environmental sustainability themes are gradually integrated into the strategies of state funding bodies and international cultural relations units.

However, for the independent cultural actors, especially small venues and festivals in the live music sector, tackling climate impact issues is only in an early stage and fraught with difficult tradeoffs between greening, artistic independence and economic viability or even survival.

3.4.1 Institutional and policy landscape

Irish policy is delivered through a tiered framework: national government departments define statutory climate and cultural mandates; state agencies like the Arts Council and Culture Ireland translate these into funding criteria; and local authorities execute the resulting environmental obligations within their operational jurisdiction. At the state level, national cultural policy is positioned within the governance domain of the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS), which oversees national frameworks and manages the state's strategic cultural relationships.

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[56]Cited in: Creative Ireland. (2026). Creative Climate Action Fund III: Grant call 2026–2029 [PDF]. Government of Ireland. https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2026/02/CI_Ireland_GrantCallsClimate_Action_2026_English_AW.pdf.
[57] See also: Paraic McQuaid, Towards Sustainable Arts – Global Edition: Practices and Policies from Eight Countries Worldwide (DutchCulture, 2025), 42–50. Available online: https://dutchculture.nl/en/news/towards-sustainable-arts-global-edition.
[58] Nyhan, Mac Mahon, Burke, and Lydon (2025). Creative Climate Change II. Policy-Brief. Available: https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2025/05/Creative-Climate-Change-II_Policy-Brief_Final-for-web.pdf

Operating as an all-of-government culture and wellbeing initiative based within the DCCS, the Creative Ireland Programme serves as the primary operational mechanism for mainstreaming creativity into public policy.[59] Creative Ireland Programme connects central government strategies with a local network of Culture Teams and Creative Ireland Coordinators across all 31 local authorities, allowing the programme to support large-scale public engagement initiatives that address complex societal challenges through artistic practices.[60]

In parallel, the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) oversees Ireland's statutory climate mitigation and adaptation frameworks, steering the state toward its legally binding targets and the five-year sectoral emissions ceilings that cap the maximum amount of greenhouse gases permitted across individual sectors of the economy.[61] The DCEE integrates its public engagement mandate across the national climate strategy framework primarily through the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). The NDCA functions as a central forum to improve public climate literacy, inclusively engage stakeholders, and gather behavioural insights to inform all-of-government climate policy.[62]

The Arts Council of Ireland acts as a principal funding arm, administering strategic and structural support to roughly 150 regularly funded arts organisations and local art centres. Complementing this, Culture Ireland operates as a specialised unit within the DCCS to promote Irish arts globally.

On the local level, the practical execution of national policies relies on local government, where all 31 authorities operate statutory Local Authority Climate Action Plans (LACAPs) and Decarbonising Zones (DZs). Dublin City Council (DCC), which formally declared a climate emergency in 2019, administers regional climate policy through a dedicated internal climate action team and the Dublin Metropolitan Climate Action Regional Office (CARO).[63]

3.4.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

The integration of environmental sustainability into the cultural sector has transitioned from a period of sector-led consultation toward a structured, albeit supportive, policy framework. Consultations conducted by Julie's Bicycle EU[64] for the Arts Council revealed that while the arts community viewed the climate and nature crisis as a major concern and had already begun responding through creative programming and public engagement, these efforts were often fragmented. Practitioners indicated that while creative climate work had seen some funding, operational and practical environmental action remained underdeveloped due to a

[59] Creative Ireland (2026); Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. (2020). Culture 2025 / Cultúr 2025: A national cultural policy framework to 2025. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/52441-minister-madigan-publishes-culture-2025-irelands-first-national-cultural-policy-framework/.
[60] Creative Ireland Programme. (2019). Engaging the public on climate change through the cultural and creative sectors (M.CO, Prep.). Government of Ireland. https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Engaging-the-Public-on-Climate-Change.pdf; Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. (2024). *Statement of strategy 2024–2025*. Government of Ireland.
[61] Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. (2025). Climate Action Plan 2025. Government of Ireland. https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/.
[62] Creative Ireland Programme. (2026). Creative Climate Action Fund III: Grant call (2026–2029). Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2026/02/CI_Ireland_GrantCallsClimate_Action_2026_English_AW.pdf.
[63] Dublin City Council. (2019). Climate change action plan 2019–2024; Creative Ireland, 2019; Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024; Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2025.
[64] This consultation was conducted in 2022 in partnership with Julie's Bicycle EU, a team bringing together Julie's Bicycle UK, Native Events and the Green Arts Initiative in Ireland. Available: https://www.nativeevents.ie/climate-action-policy-consultation-summary-report/.

lack of capacity, capital investment, and clear institutional support. This created a "doing it for itself" dynamic where the sector relied on its own nascent, grassroots initiatives to address the crisis.

The Arts Council initially developed a standalone forward-facing climate action policy to address these findings, but this was paused to allow for strategic alignment with a broader "Culture, Climate, and Creativity" framework initiated by its parent government department.[65] While the prospect of more rigorous, top-down environmental compliance was a subject of discussion during the initial movement toward more ambitious climate policy, such requirements have not (yet) materialised. As other immediate pressures such as housing supply, economic stability, and energy security have risen at the center of national political priorities, the prospect of mandatory and rigid environmental compliance requirements has become less likely in the near future.

Instead of pursuing a rigid approach focused on regulations and compliance, the Arts Council has adopted a value-led approach, aiming to embed climate and sustainability metrics directly into its upcoming strategy. The focus remains on an administrative philosophy of enabling rather than enforcing change, working in partnership with creative actors to build internal environmental commitments without introducing punitive funding rules. However, the Arts Council does require all regularly funded organisations—which account for the majority of its funding portfolio—to submit a climate action policy and plan as a condition of their funding. To support the sector in meeting this requirement, the Arts Council prioritised a collaborative approach, including a dedicated year of capacity-building featuring 10 in-person regional events and a series of thematic webinars designed to provide tailored guidance for different types of organisations. While these plans are a mandatory submission for the interim payment, the Arts Council is not currently assessing or scoring these plans against funding decisions, preferring instead to use this phase for information gathering and identifying sectoral knowledge gaps.

Complementing the Arts Council's domestic focus, Culture Ireland operates as a specialised unit within a central government department to promote Irish arts globally. Because international touring is essential to make the careers of Irish artists viable due to the small scale of the domestic market, sustainable mobility needs to be balanced with the inevitable geographical realities of being an island and thus avoiding long-haul flights, for example, is not possible. Culture Ireland has integrated environmental sustainability into its policy strategy in a general way noting as one of its main goals that all policies and decision making will be underpinned with environmental sustainability. To achieve this, the organisation has committed to (1) “engaging with the arts sector and wider interests to facilitate shifts towards more sustainable touring models; (2) collaborating with international presenters to foster more joined-up and sustainable international touring arrangements; (3) prioritising funding support for presentation models that incorporate carbon reduction measures; and (4) developing and implementing a formal environmental impact assessment system to measure progress and inform future planning.”[66]

[65] While there was a public consultation in 2023, the framework does not seem to have been fully developed. More information: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/consultations/culture-creativity-and-climate-policy-framework-survey-2023/ .
[66] Culture Ireland. (2022). Culture Ireland strategy 2022–2025. Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

To put this in practice, Culture Ireland has opted for a flexible approach that allows for fluid, light-touch criteria across different art forms, effectively acting as an enabler of sustainable touring. On one hand, they require long-haul travel to be part of a connected tour, while on the other, they have introduced specialised "extended touring grants" that allow artists to add localised, carbon-efficient dates to existing itineraries without re-entering the full application cycle.

While anticipating that fixed carbon budgets for the cultural sector might eventually be introduced through an overarching government climate policy within a longer timeframe, Culture Ireland currently focuses on pilot programmes—such as funding slow-travel maritime and rail options for writers attending the Edinburgh International Book Festival—and financing the physical creation of theatrical productions directly within long-haul territories like Australia and the US to eliminate international freight emissions.

3.4.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

The intersection of culture and climate action in Ireland is increasingly defined by a strategic all-of-government approach, where creative sectors are positioned as essential partners in achieving national climate objectives. While culture was historically absent from high-level climate policy, it is now explicitly recognised within frameworks such as the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) as a mechanism to translate climate science into meaningful public engagement. This strategic alignment seeks to bridge the gap between scientific consensus and public behaviour, acknowledging that environmental sustainability is as much a social and cultural challenge as it is a scientific or technical one.[67]

Policy Integration and the Handprint Approach

The state's policy framework now emphasises a handprint approach, where creative sectors are expected to shape and influence collective behaviour and cultural shifts rather than just pursuing decarbonisation of their own activities. It is thus recognised on the policy level that the arts, culture and creative sectors are uniquely positioned to translate complex climate science into accessible narratives, thereby making climate action more meaningful and personally relevant to the public

Institutional alignment between the climate policies and cultural and creative sectors is driven mainly by the Creative Ireland Programme. Based within the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS), this programme acts as the primary operational mechanism to mainstream "creativity" into public policy. This is supported by the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) – a forum led by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) and serving to improve climate literacy and gather behavioural insights that inform the all-of-government policy.

While the "handprint" rhetoric of policy frameworks is strategically useful, practitioners note a tension between the rhetoric and realities in the sector. Interviews with music sector actors indicate that while there is an appetite for sustainable practice, the current policy environment is often misaligned with the economic realities of the sector. Practitioners note that venues

[67] Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2024; Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2025; Creative Ireland (2019).

and festivals are often "fighting bigger fires" regarding basic financial survival, making the implementation of complex environmental policies a difficult trade-off. Furthermore, practitioners expressed concern that sustainability mandates—such as requiring climate action policies—are often "top-down" requirements that lack the accompanying technical guidance or infrastructure investment needed to be effective. This suggests that while there have already been education and capacity building initiatives, more needs to be done for this to reach a broader spectrum. Also, knowledge and knowhow will not suffice if the needed changes are beyond what is viable for smaller independent operators.

The Creative Climate Action Programme

The Creative Climate Action programme is the main instrument in the Creative Ireland Programme and the most operational tool to practice the handprint approach.

Initial funding rounds of the programme in 2021–2023 functioned as "representative projects" and exploratory pilots, intended to evaluate how creative practitioners could engage the public on changes towards climate friendly behaviour. These early interventions successfully demonstrated that creative practices can be powerful catalysts for emotional engagement.[68]

The newest round of Creative Climate Action Fund III for 2026-2029 announced in early 2026 with a budget of €6.5 million. This call scales up ambition by offering larger project grants (€400,000 to €750,000) over a three-year period. Unlike previous rounds, Creative Climate Action Fund III requires that all project teams include a "climate expert" alongside creative practitioners, seeking to ensure that artistic practice is directly tied to the scientific and policy goals outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2025.

The programme materials express optimism towards this interdisciplinary approach: *"This new Creative Climate Action Fund seeks to complement existing outreach and awareness raising work across government in relation to climate action. [...] We are seeking projects using art and creative practices to change thinking, and bring about behavioural or cultural shifts." – Creative Ireland Grant Call, 2026.*

Meanwhile, some sector actors caution that the programme might reinforce a bureaucratic, "box-ticking" approach to cultural funding that falls short of meeting the real needs on the ground to make meaningful projects happen. Without ensuring multi-annual stability, such funded one-off projects risk becoming isolated "PR exercises" rather than building the fundamental infrastructure—such as transport networks, shared technical equipment, or long-term energy upgrades—that the live music sector requires to operate sustainably. This superficiality risk was noted in the programme analysis[69] and the bigger ambition of the new funding round can perhaps be seen as trying to amend that.

3.4.4 Sectoral Initiatives

While the Irish music ecosystem lacks comprehensive, sector-wide environmental sustainability frameworks—comparable to the Elma Live in Finland or Déclic in France—there are a number of smaller, sector-led efforts. These initiatives generally fall into two categories:

[68] Mac Mahon, J., Revez, A., Burke, M., Hogan, P., & Nyhan, M. M. (2025). Arts, creative & cultural initiatives for citizen engagement on climate action: Insights from Ireland's Creative Climate Action Fund. Current Research in Environmental Sustainability, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crsust.2024.100274.
[69] Creative Ireland (2019).

practical resource-sharing for musicians and creative projects that bridge the gap between artistic practice and environmental advocacy.

Music-Specific Resources

Improvised Music Company (IMC) has developed a dedicated resource page for musicians, offering a wide selection of links and materials, ranging from practical advice and "Ideas for Greener Touring" to funding sources.

Artistic Engagement and Climate Advocacy

Recent years have seen an increase in artistic projects that integrate ecological themes into their practice, some supported by the *Creative Climate Action* grants. These projects represent the "handprint" of the sector, using creativity to raise awareness about the climate crisis.

- **Ecological composition.** Artists such as Nick Roth integrate ecological themes into his musical practice by translating scientific data—such as tree species growth patterns and DNA sequences—into musical scores that map forest development and evolution. Through immersive projects like Little Woodland Heights and Water Project, Roth employs "translative epistemology" to foster a deeper emotional connection between audiences and environmental systems, advocating for a shift in climate engagement from fear-based messaging to approaches rooted in wonder and stewardship. .
- **Community-led festivals such as the** *Sustainable Skerries Festival* and *Climate Camp Ireland* demonstrate the potential for local, community-driven events to integrate sustainability into the production of culture.

3.5 Norway

Norway, much like its Nordic counterparts, is marked by a high degree of societal salience regarding the ecological transition, with deep integration into public discourse among cultural professionals and policymakers alike. However, the Norwegian landscape for environmental sustainability (ES) in the music sector is characterised by a bottom-up momentum that often outpaces top-down policy, leading to significant sector-led initiatives that currently drive the green transition.

The policy and institutional framework in Norway for the live music sector is shaped by a commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, which the government has positioned as a central pillar for national and international development. While general climate policy is robust, cultural policy itself is only gradually developing specific, systematic ES strategies for the music field. The emphasis remains on voluntary transition and sectoral self-regulation, supported by public awareness of the sector's potential to drive broader societal change through its "positive environmental handprint".[70]

[70] Green Roadmap. (n.d.). *Green Roadmap for Norway*. Available online: https://xn--grntveikart-hgb.no/om-groent-veikart/.

3.5.1 Institutional and policy landscape

The governance of cultural policy in Norway rests primarily with the Ministry of Culture and Equality (*Kultur- og likestillingsdepartementet*), which sets the national strategic direction. While the ministry supports national cultural institutions and provides statutory funding for various arts organizations, local government bodies (*kommuner and fylkeskommuner*) play an important role as co-funders of local festivals, venues, and arts schools, providing the operational spaces essential for music and performing arts.

Regarding music policy more specifically, a recent comprehensive analysis of the sector[71] notes that the current institutional landscape can be described as a “sedimentary” development, where music policy has been built up layer-by-layer over time, resulting in a system that lacks sufficient strategic coordination across administrative levels.[72] Navigating the inconsistent criteria and siloed governance across various administrative levels can be challenging for live music actors. To move beyond this, the report suggests the music sector needs a more polyphonic (*flerstemt*) policy framework—one that shifts from narrow cultural governance to a cross-sectoral (*tverrsektorielt*) perspective that aligns the sector's administrative tools and support systems with broader societal goals.

The primary national body responsible for the administration of arts funding is the **Arts Council Norway** (*Kulturdirektoratet/Kulturrådet*), which acts as the main funding arm for independent music actors and project-based cultural initiatives. Complementing the national focus of Arts Council Norway, the regional infrastructure is strengthened by the *Musikkontoret* network which joins together regional music offices—such as MØST, Brak, Tempo, and Musikkontoret Nord, serving as dedicated development centres. These offices provide critical practical guidance, local networking, and competence-building services to artists, venues, and music businesses, ensuring that national policy objectives are translated into actionable support at the regional level.

3.5.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

Norway’s approach to environmental sustainability in the cultural sector has been sector-led, but is now being gradually complemented by a more structured government policy approach.

The **Green Roadmap for the Arts and Culture Sector** (*Grønt veikart for kunst- og kultursektoren*), launched in 2021, served as the essential precursor to contemporary government initiatives. Emerging from bottom-up momentum—initiated by organisations like *Norske Konsertarrangører*, *Vinjerock*, and *Øyafestivalen*—the roadmap acted as a "guiding compass" for the industry rather than as a proxy for government policy. It outlined three tiers of responsibility:

- For organisations: Implementation of sustainability management, environmental certification (such as *Miljøfyrtårn*), and formal climate accounts.
- For artists: Setting environmental requirements in contracts and actively reducing personal travel footprints.
- For authorities: Integrating UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into all cultural policy and coordinating public funding for green innovation.

[71] NOU 2025:7. (2025). *Musikklandet: Flerstemt musikkpolitikk for framtiden* [Land of music: Polyphonic music policy for the future]. Kultur- og likestillingsdepartementet. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/324fa3fcf33a45569fbe585e553ae90e/no/pdfs/nou202520250007000dddpdfs.pdf.
[72] See also: Løkka (2023). *Mot en grønn og bærekraftig kultursektor: En statusrapport* (TF-rapport nr. 794). Telemarksforsking.

While it provided the strategic direction, the roadmap intentionally left the adaptation of specific measures to the diverse needs of individual actors, reflecting the sector's desire for ownership over the green transition.

Institutional Policy: The 2024 Mapping and 2025 Program

Following the roadmap, the state formalised its approach through the Arts and Culture Norway (*Kulturdirektoratet*). In 2024, Arts and Culture Norway published a mapping of the sector's climate and environmental work, which identified three primary barriers to green transition: (1) a lack of internal resources (time and personnel); (2) the high cost of green investments; and (3) a significant knowledge gap, particularly among smaller entities.

To address these findings, Arts and Culture Norway launched the Climate and Environmental Program (*Klima- og miljøprogram for kultursektoren*) in 2025. This program marks a transition from mainly knowledge gathering to an agenda for concrete action. Based on a strategic analysis and prioritisation exercise, the program focuses on three strategic pillars:

1. Reduction of climate emissions and increased energy efficiency through minimising carbon footprints from activities and promoting renewable energy.
2. Resource use and circular solutions by reducing overall resource consumption and promoting sharing and circularity throughout the value chain.
3. Adaptation to physical climate risk by strengthening the resilience of cultural institutions and events against the impacts of a changing climate.

The plan proposes 14 measures, five of which have been designated of high priority.

1. **Green culture portal** – a national digital portal to consolidate existing resources, regulations, best practices, and funding opportunities for green operations.
2. **New guides and tools** – developing specific tools, checklists, and templates to support green transitions across different cultural fields.
3. **Course and conference program** – a capacity-building program of workshops, webinars, and conferences to strengthen green competence in the sector.
4. **Environmental requirements for state funding recipients** – a systematic approach to standardising environmental requirements for funding recipients, with a phased implementation tailored to the capacity of different actors.
5. **Environmental fund/innovation grants for green transition** – establishing dedicated funding to support green innovation, circular solutions, and environmental competence.

The first three measures seem to have been completed. There is a new green resource portal for culture (in Norwegian only) – Gro. The platform has thematic areas such as venues and arenas and transportation and tour, it serves as a repository of tools, guides, and policy documents. In 2025, Arts Council of Norway also organised an international sustainability program for music and performing arts actors. The fourth priority measure, eco-conditionality, was planned for 2026 and is still in the works. The fifth measure of funding for innovation grants was not budgeted for 2026 at least, but it remains to be seen for future periods.

Insights from stakeholder engagement suggest that while policy frameworks are increasingly ambitious, bridging the gap between national strategy and sectoral reality remains challenging. Research indicates that the urgency within the sector is high, but organisations

often face an "implementation gap" where the complexity of these transitions—particularly regarding audience mobility and infrastructure—can overwhelm smaller organisations.[73] The program explicitly acknowledges that rigid, top-down requirements could be counterproductive for smaller actors. Instead, a phased approach is preferred where monitoring methods and capacity are developed before imposing any stricter eco-conditionality. Field reports highlight that larger festivals often have the capacity to act as "lighthouses" for green innovation, but many independent operators still lack the administrative capacity to manage detailed climate reporting without better infrastructure and, crucially, simplified access to regional and municipal support.

3.5.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

Norway's broader climate and environmental policy is anchored in the Climate Change Act (*Lov om klimamål*)[74], which mandates that the country becomes a low-emission society by 2050. This national framework is further operationalised through the Climate Action Plan for 2021–2030[75], which outlines the strategy for reducing non-quota emissions across sectors.

In national climate and sustainability policy, "culture" is generally not treated as an independent dimension or a strategic actor in emission reduction. Instead, it is predominantly framed through the concept of the "cultural environment" (*kulturmiljø*). In the white paper “New goals for Norway’s cultural environment policy”[76], the cultural environment is positioned as a common good that contributes to sustainable development primarily through its role in integrated land-use and social planning.

In this rhetoric, the contribution of the cultural environment is twofold: (1) sustainability understood as preservation through framing cultural environments as assets that provide a basis for knowledge and experience, with an emphasis on the "circularity" of reusing the existing building stock to reduce emissions associated with new construction; (2) the cultural environment is linked to social sustainability, where its preservation contributes to identity, quality of life, and public health.

Academic analysis indicates that this positioning of culture within national sustainability frameworks remains limited in scope. Key critiques identified in recent research include:

First, regarding instrumentalisation, critics argue that policymakers treat culture primarily as a "handprint"—a communication tool to foster awareness about sustainable values—rather than recognising the sector as an industrial actor that requires state-integrated infrastructure to achieve deep decarbonisation.[77]

Second, regarding siloed governance, there is a persistent structural disconnect between the management of cultural environment policy, which resides under the Ministry of Climate and Environment, and the broader arts and cultural sector, which falls under the Ministry of Culture and Equality. This prevents the performing and visual arts sectors from accessing the

[73] See also Løkka (2023) for this.
[74] Available online: https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2017-06-16-60.
[75] Available online: https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a78ecf5ad2344fa5ae4a394412ef8975/en-gb/pdfs/stm202020210013000engpdfs.pdf
[76] Klima- og miljødepartementet. (2020). New goals for Norway’s cultural environment policy: Involvement, sustainability and diversity (Meld. St. 16 (2019–2020)). Regjeringen.no. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/35b42a6383f442b4b501de0665ec8fcf/en-gb/pdfs/stm201920200016000engpdfs.pdf
[77] Løkka (2023). *Mot en grønn og bærekraftig kultursektor: En statusrapport* (TF-rapport nr. 794). Telemarksforsking.

state-led climate infrastructure and energy-efficiency frameworks that are systematically applied to larger industrial sectors.[78]

Third, regarding the "business as usual" approach, research suggests that while there is an expansion of green initiatives within the cultural sector, these often occur as voluntary, self-governing projects. Without formal integration into national climate frameworks, the sector struggles to move beyond incremental adjustments to traditional operating methods, functioning as a peripheral participant rather than a strategic partner in the state's low-emission transition.[79]

In summary, while Norway's national policy acknowledges the "cultural environment" as a resource for planning, the broader arts and culture sector is not systematically integrated into the formal mechanisms designed to execute the national low-emission transition. This gap is then somewhat filled by the climate programme of Arts and Culture Norway.

3.5.4 Sectoral Initiatives

As mentioned, sector-led initiatives have predated governmental policy. In Norway, there are many so comprehensive overview is not feasible, but many resources provide links, most recently the Gro platform.

The Green Producers Tool (GPT) represents the most comprehensive technical initiative currently available to the sector. Developed by the Green Producers Club in collaboration with CICERO (Center for International Climate Research), it provides a standardised, research-based methodology for measuring emissions specifically tailored to the nuances of cultural productions, including concerts and festivals. By providing a common framework for climate accounting, the GPT enables music organisations to transition from qualitative environmental aspirations to quantitative, data-driven management.

Norske Kulturarrangører (NKA) and *Øyafestivalen* have spearheaded the Green Event Standard (*Grønn arrangementsstandard*) and the Environmental Handbook (*Miljøhåndboka*). These resources provide a strategic framework for outdoor events, addressing systemic challenges such as energy consumption, waste management, and sustainable transport. These initiatives are significant because they promote a "sectoral standard" that individual organisers can adopt, facilitating a harmonised approach to environmental practices that transcends individual venue operations.

Kulturrom manages the Greener Investments (*Grønnere investeringer*) initiative, which addresses the physical and technical infrastructure of venues. By providing grants for the repair of existing technical equipment and promoting circular use of spaces, this initiative aims to extend the lifecycle of cultural assets and reduce the sector's reliance on the "use-and-throw" cycle, as documented in the sector-wide report *Framtidas kulturlokaler*.

Kulturrom acts as a crucial sectoral initiative by managing public investment schemes, such as Greener Investments (*Grønnere investeringer*), which address the physical and technical

[78] Klimautvalget 2050. (2023). *Omstilling til lavutslipp: Veivalg for klimapolitikken mot 2050* (NOU 2023: 25). *Klima- og miljødepartementet*.
[79] Løkka (2023).

infrastructure of music venues. As a state-mandated administrator of public funds, Kulturrom provides grants for the repair and circular reuse of technical equipment, directly supporting the professionalisation of sustainable infrastructure. By extending the lifecycle of technical assets and promoting the efficient use of existing performance spaces—as documented in the sector-wide report *Framtidas kulturlokaler*[80]—this initiative reduces the industry's reliance on the consumption of new equipment, thereby operationalising circular economy principles within the music sector.

Miljøfyrtårn (Eco-Lighthouse) provides specific certification criteria tailored for cultural events and venues. This initiative enables systematic environmental management by requiring organisations to meet documented standards for energy use, waste sorting, and transport, thereby offering a formalised verification of an organisation's commitment to the green transition.

3.6 Poland

The integration of environmental sustainability into the Polish cultural policy landscape is hampered by a lack of sufficient coordination between different levels of the state. While national strategies like the National Development Concept 2050[81] set broad goals for resilience and climate adaptation, these objectives have not (yet) been translated into specific mandates for the cultural sector. As a result, cultural policy is currently moving in two directions at once: national institutions remain largely reactive, while some local municipalities are pushing ahead with their own climate-neutrality and urban development initiatives.

3.6.1 Institutional and policy landscape

Cultural policy in Poland relies on a decentralised funding model, with approximately 80% of cultural expenditure managed at regional and municipal levels. The national Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (*Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego*) maintains central oversight, but its institutional framework is currently undergoing an internal rebuilding process following years of political volatility. At this national level, policy documents such as the NDC 2050, define the role of culture primarily through the lens of "high culture", institutional prestige, identity, and social cohesion. This top-down framing implicitly prioritises state-owned institutions and heritage preservation over the contemporary, independent music, and more broadly arts, sector that forms the majority of the country's creative activity.

A new cultural policy agenda—the Strategy for Culture until 2050—is in the making, but until it is finalised, the sector needs to operate under legal frameworks largely derived from 1991 legislation, which does not account for modern challenges such as environmental sustainability. Policy actors indicate that while there is an intent to define new strategic agendas, the sector currently lacks the technical expertise to integrate sustainability into daily operations. Furthermore, the economic reality of the cultural sector—characterised by precarious employment, with 58% of artists earning at or below the minimum wage and high levels of professional burnout—makes it difficult for independent actors to prioritise

[80] Kulturrom (2024), available online: https://kulturrom.no/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Rapport-Framtidas-Kulturlokaler_SEPT2024.pdf.
[81] Available online: https://www.gov.pl/web/funds-regional-policy/national-development-concept-2050.

environmental objectives over immediate financial stability.[82] *Independent actors argue that this financial precarity makes rigid environmental mandates feel like an "oppressive" administrative burden rather than a feasible operational goal.*

Crucially, cultural policy is moving in two directions at once: national institutions remain largely reactive, while some local municipalities are pushing ahead with their own climate-neutrality and urban development initiatives that are more aligned with contemporary independent practices. These municipal efforts are governed by the National Urban Policy 2030[83], which establishes a framework for sustainable urban development, focusing on the "compact city" model, the deployment of blue-green infrastructure, and the rational management of resources. This policy creates an opportunity for the music sector to link its own sustainability goals with city-wide urban development projects. However, practitioners note that integration efforts often fail because they lack foundational research into the specific needs of local populations, such as the mobility requirements of elderly residents or the practical realities of small business logistics.

3.6.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

Integration of environmental sustainability into Polish cultural policy is currently more rhetoric than practice. Although the National Development Concept 2050 positions culture as a vehicle for social cohesion, it does not mandate carbon-reduction targets for the music sector or culture more broadly. Policy discussions have begun to address "green criteria" in grant-making systems, yet there is a strong expert consensus against such top-down impositions. Policy actors note that these environmental topics are frequently viewed with suspicion by the sector; they are often perceived as an external "dictate" or a burdensome administrative requirement rather than a collaborative goal, which triggers resistance in a field already struggling with fundamental economic survival.

National strategies remain detached from the daily realities of music professionals. Instead of rigid, top-down rules, professionals argue that policy would be more effective if it acted as "enabling regulation"—for instance, by restructuring grant criteria to specifically fund the higher costs of train travel and slow touring rather than just setting targets. Musicians and promoters emphasise that organic co-programming and regional touring networks are far more effective than government-imposed requirements. These networks allow them to share costs and logistics naturally, reducing carbon footprints through practical partnership rather than administrative pressure. Conversely, common industry practices—such as "exclusivity clauses" in contracts, often driven by the "ego of the programmer"—frequently force artists into unnecessary and environmentally harmful travel, running directly counter to sustainability goals.

Policy experts also view culture not just through its own carbon footprint, but through its ability to spark social change and raise climate awareness— the "handprint" argument. In this view, culture helps tell and amplify important ecological stories. However, turning this into real action requires careful communication. Because "green" policies are often seen as unnecessary paperwork or pressure from Brussels, they need to be reframed. Sustainability should be presented as a responsible, locally grounded practice that reflects existing

[82] See the study *Policzone i Policzeni* (2024), available in Polish: https://swps.pl/images/DOKUMENTY/Policzone_policzeni_2024_Raport_ONLINE-4.pdf.
[83] See more information: https://www.gov.pl/web/funds-regional-policy/national-urban-policy.

community values, rather than a top-down demand. Real progress requires moving away from performative greenwashing—such as banning certain car engines without offering real public transport alternatives—and toward systemic support that treats cultural spaces as essential parts of social-environmental resilience, not just as peripheral assets.

3.6.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

The official stance of the Polish state regarding the role of culture in sustainable development is articulated through the lens of broad national resilience and social cohesion. In the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Poland: The 2023 National Report[84], culture is not framed as a standalone instrument for environmental policy but is instead positioned as a prerequisite for a stable, inclusive society. The state views culture as a mechanism to foster civic participation, national belonging, and social sensitivity and empathy—values considered essential for a resilient state.

There is a gap between the state's sustainability rhetoric—which focuses heavily on energy security, food safety, and the decarbonisation of heavy industry—and its cultural policies. While the 2023 National Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights "environmental awareness" as a horizontal goal across all public policies, the cultural sector is largely absent from the technical climate adaptation frameworks.

Current national policy is largely industrial and infrastructure-focused, leaving contemporary creative practices outside of statutory climate-mitigation plans and instruments. Although environmental sustainability is a declared national priority, cultural policy currently lacks the specific funding instruments, carbon-footprint metrics, or ecological conditionality that are increasingly applied to other economic sectors.

While the National Urban Policy 2030 mandates a transition toward "compact," "green," and "efficient" cities, it does not categorise cultural venues as critical infrastructure in the same manner as transport or water management systems. As a result, the cultural sector remains largely peripheral to the implementation of the National Urban Policy 2030. While the state has completed technical climate risk assessments for 44 major cities—resulting in binding urban adaptation plans—these focus primarily on technical infrastructure, such as stormwater management and blue-green infrastructure, rather than the social or cultural assets.[85]

While some cities have initiated projects—such as the Action Plan for Cities—that encourage holistic urban development, these frameworks generally treat cultural venues as social assets rather than functional components of climate resilience. In practice, cultural entities are rarely integrated into the technical deployment of blue-green infrastructure or mandatory municipal climate-adaptation contracts. Integration is thus not a systematic outcome of national urban policy, but rather a sporadic, local-level exception, often dependent on the specific priorities of individual municipal administrations rather than a formal, scalable policy integration.

3.6.4 Sectoral Initiatives

Grassroots action remains the primary driver of change in the absence of national policy.

[84] Available online: https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%202023%20Poland%20Report.pdf.
[85] More information: https://www.gov.pl/web/climate/adaptation-plans-in-44-polish-cities-

Culture for Climate (*Kultura dla Klimatu*) was established in 2020 by a collective of women working across cultural institutions, NGOs, local authorities, and independent arts. It functions as a grassroots, self-organised initiative aimed at systemic change. The collective provides a comprehensive knowledge resource, including climate crisis information, verified data, reports, and recommended eco-certification systems to support institutions in their ecological transition. It explicitly promotes pro-environmental attitudes without shaming, focusing on individual and collective agency to implement changes in areas where they have influence. The project has received support from the Culture Department of the City of Warsaw, the Warsaw Observatory of Culture, and EIT Climate-KIC.

Municipal and local-level initiatives:

Festivals for the Climate (*Festiwale dla Klimatu*) in Kraków: this is a collaborative initiative launched by over a dozen Kraków-based festival organisers to develop feasible, pro-climate solutions for the cultural sector. Rather than focusing on abstract policy, the group created a practical collection of good practices—including carbon footprint calculation, promotion of eco-friendly commuting, and resource sharing—that are now available as a model for other cultural entities.

Warsaw Green Building Standard (WGBS) for Cultural Infrastructure. Warsaw has operationalised its climate neutrality goals by creating the Warsaw Green Building Standard (WGBS) for all new city-owned buildings, including new cultural centres and public libraries. This standard provides specific requirements for water retention, energy efficiency, and sustainable materials that go beyond national law. For example, the Białołęka district public library was designed with solar panels and natural lighting, serving as a flagship for how municipal cultural infrastructure

Capacity building and educational projects. Initiatives like *#ZielonaInstytucjaKultury* (Green Cultural Institution) has focused on green education for adults, fostering international communities of cultural practitioners dedicated to environmental protection. These projects have been supported by European programmes like Erasmus+, aiming to professionalise sustainable cultural management.

3.7 Spain

3.7.1 Institutional and policy landscape

Cultural policy in Spain is a shared competence between the state, seventeen autonomous communities, and local municipal authorities. At the national level, the Ministry of Culture provides the overarching strategic direction through policy plans and regulations. The most recent cultural strategy – the Plan for Cultural Rights 2025–2030 (*Plan de Derechos Culturales 2025-2030*)[86]– establishes a strategic focus by positioning culture as a fundamental human right and a cross-cutting social resource. This national framework aims to democratise cultural participation and institutionalise the recognition of cultural labour.

[86] Available online: https://planderechosculturales.cultura.gob.es/dam/jcr:6724d89c-cb41-49d8-bb15-15dbb7c268f9/plan-de-ddcc.pdf.

While the central government holds exclusive competence over basic rules regarding copyright legislation and freedom of expression, most of the public spending on culture is done at the regional and local levels.[87] Autonomous communities have significant powers to regulate, develop and promote their own cultural sectors. Specialised regional bodies act as the main operational agents, developing strategies and streamlining the distribution of public funds and support to local creative industries. Many autonomous communities have established dedicated cultural agencies, such as:

- **Catalonia:** the **Catalan Institute for Cultural Companies (ICEC)** alongside its main Department of Culture runs targeted business development programs and international touring grants, including those specifically tailored for musicians and music labels (see: Music).
- **Galicia:** the **Galician Cultural Industries Agency (Agadic)** manages funding for music and theater, including sector-specific promotion platforms like *GalicianTunes*.
- **The Valencian Community** channels its performance networks, venue funding, and live music support through the **Valencian Institute of Culture (IVC)**.
- **Madrid** – also as an autonomous community – manages its live music venue support, music festival funding, and independent artist grants through its regional ministry's **Directorate-General for Culture and Creative Industries**.

This regional layer is where policy translates into practice, as these bodies design the funding mechanisms that directly influence venue and festival operations. This decentralised approach is reflected across other regions, where strategies are increasingly tailored to specific regional identities and priorities.[88]

Local municipal governments manage the immediate operational conditions for live music, such as noise regulations, venue licensing, and urban planning. Backed by the Local Regime Act 1985, municipal authorities possess broad powers to promote local cultural activities and amenities.[89] This proximity to citizens explains why the bulk of public cultural spending—historically over 50%—is executed at the local level through entities such as civic centres and municipal cultural houses.

This multi-level governance model creates a fragmented environment where organisations must navigate distinct local, regional and national regulations and support systems.[90] As a result, the effectiveness of national cultural initiatives depends on the level of alignment and cooperation between these authorities, with experts noting that the current reliance on short-term, project-based funding models can hold back the structural investment needed for long-term development. To facilitate cross-governmental alignment, initiatives like the Sectoral Conference on Culture (*Conferencia Sectorial de Cultura*)[91] exist to coordinate policy, manage supra-regional projects, and circulate good practices between the central administration and the autonomous communities.

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[87] Baltà Portolés, J., & Bashiron Mendolicchio, H. (2022). Towards sustainable arts: Recent developments in Spain. In J. J. Knol, J. Pigaht, & B. Schrijen (Eds.), Towards sustainable arts: European best practices and policies (pp. 57–64). Boekman Foundation.
[88] Baltà Portolés & Bashiron Mendolicchio (2022).
[89] Villarroya, A., Ateca-Amestoy, V., & Pérez Rothstein, P. (2019). Compendium of cultural policies and trends: Country profile Spain (20th ed.). Association of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends. https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf_full/spain/Full-country-profile_Spain.pdf.
[90] Baltà Portolés & Bashiron Mendolicchio (2022).
[91] See more information on the website of the Spanish Government: https://www.cultura.gob.es/cultura/areas/cooperacion/mc/conferencia-sectorial/informacion-general.html.

3.7.2 Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Policy

National level

Environmental sustainability occupies a specific, though structurally limited, position within the national Plan for Cultural Rights 2025–2030. Out of the plan's 146 total measures, only eleven are dedicated to "Sustainability and the 2030 Agenda". The official text relies on broad, theoretical concepts, presenting culture as a tool for "public reflection" and "eco-social responsibility" to help society address the climate emergency. In its published format, the plan does not explicitly reference music or live performance; instead, it provides generalised guidelines for "cultural agents" and "cultural facilities".

While the official plan speaks broadly of promoting "ecological transitions" and "sustainability plans," the Ministry specifies[92] that the long-term goal is to shift the entire public and private cultural ecosystem towards more sustainable management models. This includes raising awareness, defining technical guidelines, and progressively establishing mechanisms for measurement and monitoring, which in the future could become requirements for accessing public funding.

However, the Ministry acknowledges that forcing strict compliance rules across the cultural ecosystem without adequate administrative support could create an unviable operational burden that hinders the daily operations of smaller cultural actors. To balance this, the official plan outlines general commitments to training and support. The Ministry intends to translate these into programmes that promote sustainable practices and facilitate the ecological transition of both public and private agents, ensuring they are supported through the process.

Regional and local level

The broad and mostly abstract national level approach to environmental sustainability as part of the policy plan is complemented by a fragmented landscape of regional and local regulations, strategies, programmes and toolkits. Across Spain, local and regional authorities are using different speeds and mechanisms to introduce green requirements, ranging from strict mandatory rules to voluntary eco-labels and targeted funding programmes.[93]

- **Navarra** legally mandates strict environmental criteria for public events through *Decreto Foral 36/2024*.[94] This mandatory regulation applies to any public event that is organised, sponsored, or funded by public administrations, or those simply requiring a public permit. For events drawing over 2000 attendees, it is compulsory to calculate the carbon footprint, separate waste on-site, and eliminate most single-use plastics.
- **Madrid** enforces municipal environmental rules via the Air Quality and Sustainability Ordinance (*Ordenanza de Calidad del Aire y Sostenibilidad – OCAS*).[95] This regulation builds air quality and environmental sustainability targets directly into the mandatory permit approval process for public events requiring municipal authorisation. However, sector experts note an enforcement gap here: while councils demand carbon footprint

[92] Based on a direct communication with the Spanish Ministry of Culture for this research (November, 2025).
[93] The author thanks Jone Perez for the overview of regional policies, programmes and tools.
[94] Available here: Las entidades locales no podrán utilizar plásticos de un solo uso en sus eventos públicos a partir del próximo 3 de mayo
[95] Available here: Ordenanza de Calidad del aire y Sostenibilidad - Ayuntamiento de Madrid.

estimates to grant permits, they rarely verify the actual data post-event, which can reduce the process to a paper-based box-ticking exercise

- **The Basque Country** relies on a voluntary certification framework known as *Erronka Garbia*.[96] This structured eco-label scheme assesses event performance across six key areas: mobility, energy, water, waste, sustainable procurement, and temporary infrastructure. This certification is increasingly recognised in regional grant programmes, giving certified events an advantage when applying for public funds.

- **Catalonia** operates under the regional "Pla C" (*Cultura pel Clima*) strategy by the regional Ministry of Culture (see below for a brief case study). This platform acts as a voluntary guidance framework, supplying event organisers and cultural actors with practical toolkits and best practices to lower their environmental impact.

- **The Canary Islands** uses public funding as an industrial policy tool through its promotional agency, *Promotur*. Environmental performance has been turned into a core requirement for event sponsorship grants, directly aligning funding with the region's Climate Action Master Plan (2022–2030) and the global Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.[97] Organisers must present measurable proof of carbon reduction, circular economy practices, and resource management to protect the archipelago's fragile ecosystems, meaning environmental compliance is evaluated alongside traditional marketing reach and economic impact. However, some professionals point out that this model creates an uneven playing field. While large commercial festivals have the budgets to hire full-time sustainability managers, independent operators find that the cost of technical audits can swallow up the value of the grant itself.

- **Andalusia** ties regional grants for circular economy and climate adaptation directly to its official regional environmental protocols.[98] Funding is contingent on an event's compliance with the European "Do No Significant Harm" principle and a demonstrable commitment to water efficiency, waste reduction, and renewable energy under the Andalusian Circular Economy Law and the Regional Action Plan for Climate. The regional government also provides a public Sustainable Events Calculator[99] tied directly to its official Sustainable Events Protocol.

- **Valladolid** supports local event organisers through its municipal Tourism Sustainability Plan ("*Ciudad Creativa*")[100], funded by NextGenerationEU recovery funds. This programme provides direct financial support and grants for carbon footprint measurement, sustainability planning, and professional consultancy, which includes a public tender to develop a local sustainability toolkit for event organisers.

To support music venues and festival operators in navigating these diverse local requirements, several public and open-access carbon footprint tools are available across different regions. For the live music sector specifically, the FMA (The Association of Music

[96] Available here: https://www.ihobe.eus/en/erronka-garbia-sustainable-event
[97] More info here: Sustainability | Turismo de Islas Canarias.
[98] More info here: integrating the green approach into the budget along with a gender perspective in Andalusia
[99] The calculator in an excel form can be downloaded from: https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/portal/documents/20151/172328671/Calculadora-Eventos-v2.xlsx/f9f10169-3607-5d50-2215-5a6f71e7d751?t=1751262620111.
[100] Available here: PSTD Valladolid Ciudad Creativa.

Festivals) provides a free Music Festivals Calculator designed to track Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. On a wider scale, the online platform ScopeCO2, developed by the non-profit foundation Ecodes, offers open registration for live events and organisations looking to map, verify, and report their total climate impact.

Case Study: Catalonia's Pla C (Culture for Climate)

The Catalan Institute for Cultural Companies (ICEC), an agency under the regional Ministry of Culture, launched "Pla C" (Culture for Climate) (*Pla de Sostenibilitat Ambiental de les Empreses Culturals 2022–2024*)[101] as a strategic roadmap to address the climate emergency within the regional creative industry. Introduced in May 2022, the plan served as an institutional response to the Generalitat de Catalunya's 2019 climate emergency declaration and its subsequent Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The primary objective of Pla C is to accelerate an ecological transition across Catalonia's cultural economy by establishing sustainable production metrics, financing frameworks, and technical toolkits. Rather than treating sustainability as a detached peripheral regulatory area, the roadmap structures public support around the core premise that culture possesses a unique creative potential to shift public values and create new narratives for a just climate transition.

Pla C coordinates its administrative services, financial aid, and carbon-reduction targets across three distinct strategic areas that split the institutional focus between internal operational adjustments and external industry guidance:

- **Strategic Area 1 – Greening the Industry** directs outward-facing public programs to equip private cultural companies with resources, dedicated training, and bespoke consultancy support to directly minimise their environmental footprints.
- **Strategic Area 2 – Social Transformation** targets the creation of open platforms and specialised funding lines to motivate cultural actors to create content that raises public climate awareness and amplifies environmental discourse.
- **Strategic Area 3 – Internal Governance** reorganises the internal administrative structures of ICEC itself. This includes appointing a dedicated environmental sustainability officer to monitor plan progress, calculating the agency's internal carbon footprint, and enforcing strict green public procurement and energy efficiency criteria across facilities under its direct remit.

To move from these general objectives towards sector-specific actions, the plan relies on practical toolkits and targeted funding that directly alter the operational framework for, for example, live music actors, touring, and concert venues. Because general policy terms often remain abstract, the structural framework builds on translated guidelines developed with Julie's Bicycle to target music-specific production phases:

- **Sustainable touring frameworks (action 15).** To address the high carbon footprint of transport, the framework focuses on the deployment of "flexible productions". It provides design guidelines for lightweight stage setups and structural gear to directly reduce vehicle cargo demands. It also establishes the standard use of "sustainability

[101] The resource page for the plan, including the main document and other resources, including on touring and audience mobility, is here: Sostenibilitat Stack - Issuu.

riders" (or green riders) in artist contracts, prompting collaboration between managers, booking agents, and venues regarding backstage waste management, water efficiency, and the complete elimination of single-use plastics.

- **Audience mobility and transport sourcing.** Recognising that audience travel constitutes the single largest source of emissions for live events, the plan outlines practical initiatives for venue operators to implement. This includes guidelines for coordinating custom ticket-and-transit passes with public transport companies, capping parking availability to encourage car-sharing applications, and providing secure, on-site bicycle storage facilities to lower the carbon impact of spectators.

- **Targeted sustainability subsidies.** Live music operators can access specific public grant lines to offset transition costs. These include *Subsidies for Consultancy Work (Action 10)*, which directly finance environmental sustainability assessments, energy audits for venues, and waste management studies. Furthermore, the *Subsidies for Impact Reduction (Action 11)* line funds practical current expenditures or technical capital investments, such as upgrading old venue grids to low-energy stage lighting.

- **Carbon calculation and resource pools.** The strategy introduces the *Environmental Impact Calculator for the Cultural Industry (Action 16)* to track Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. For performance spaces, this domestic calculator maps factors like electricity consumption bills against specific power provider emission mixes, gas-heating fuel volumes, on-site garbage weight, and estimated audience transport percentages. This is supported by *Action 17*, an upcoming digital exchange infrastructure designed to facilitate the regional sharing, circular tracking, and physical reuse of technical event gear and stage materials between different performance promoters.

3.7.3 Culture in Sustainable Development Policy

At the **national** policy level, culture occupies a peripheral and predominantly text-based position within Spain's overarching climate change and sustainable development frameworks. Spain's core environmental legislation, **Law 7/2021 on Climate Change and Energy Transition**[102], lays down strict national targets for 2030, including a mandatory 23% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990, alongside goals to achieve a 42% share of renewables in final energy consumption and a 74% renewable electricity system. These targets are designed to align Spain countrywide with the European Union's broader objective of achieving a 55% reduction in emissions by 2030 and full carbon neutrality by 2050. However, this primary climate law does not/not specifically mention the cultural or creative sectors. Instead, the law affects cultural operators indirectly through horizontal axes that apply across all industrial sectors, such as nationwide requirements for energy efficiency, building renovations, and public education and training to tackle climate change.

The explicit integration of culture into wider national policy only occurs under the broader umbrella of the UN 2030 Agenda, though these frameworks heavily favour social and economic sustainability over direct environmental mandates. In the Spanish government's official guidelines for the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (*Estrategia de Desarrollo Sostenible 2030*), culture's role is framed almost entirely around socio-demographic goals,

[102] Available here: Law 7/2021 on climate change and energy transition.

such as ensuring equal access and consumption by directing cultural programming toward disadvantaged geographical areas and groups at risk of social exclusion. Economically, the framework seeks to balance corporate monopolies in major cities by supporting local independent operators while establishing regulatory safeguards to guarantee stable, fair working conditions for precarious cultural workers. Beyond these high-level goals, there are no concrete ecological and carbon-reduction expectations for cultural entities.

This social and economic focus is replicated at the **regional level**, resulting in a lack of environmental policy for culture across Spain's Autonomous Communities. When regional governments design their localised Sustainable Development Strategies (Estrategias de Desarrollo Sostenible) and regional Agenda 2030 frameworks, they regularly categorise culture as a tool for regional identity, gender equality, and rural demographic revitalisation. Concrete environmental regulations—such as venue energy audits or green touring protocols—are absent.

This division between social goals and environmental requirements varies significantly across the **regions**. When regional governments design their localised Sustainable Development Strategies (*Estrategias de Desarrollo Sostenible*) and regional Agenda 2030 frameworks, they frequently categorise culture as a tool for regional identity, gender equality, and rural demographic revitalisation. However, there are practical solutions (as detailed in the previous section) in some regions, such as Navarra's mandatory carbon counting for large events or Catalonia's Pla C transition tools. All in all, with regards to positioning the cultural sectors in the broader environmental sustainability agendas the policy landscape is fragmented and uneven.

* * *

In summary, the policy landscape is fragmented and produces uneven results in practice. One big issue raised by experts is unevenly developed public transport. While public transport is highly efficient in hubs like Madrid and Barcelona, outer regions such as Galicia, Andalusia, and the Canary Islands face distinct rail deficits, often leaving flying or driving as the only practical options for artists and audiences alike. In addition to these infrastructure issues, building optimal touring routes is further challenged by "exclusivity clauses". Another issue pertains to the lack of standards for calculators and carbon accounting. As public and private initiatives develop their own tools, a lack of transparency about what goes on in the applications, what emission factors are used, etc. means that comparability is not really possible.

3.7.4 Sectoral Initiatives

To support music venues and festival operators in navigating diverse regional policies, independent sector associations and research bodies have introduced practical, everyday tools. Because public frameworks often remain abstract, these voluntary, sector-led initiatives provide the actual methodologies used by promoters to manage their environmental impact.

- **The REDS Sustainable Culture Guide:** Developed by the Spanish Network for Sustainable Development (*Red Española para el Desarrollo Sostenible*), the guide titled "*Hacia una cultura sostenible. Guía práctica para integrar la Agenda 2030 en el sector cultural*" acts as a foundational blueprint across Spain. This manual explicitly translates the global UN Sustainable Development Goals into practical operational

guidelines and indicators, allowing cultural managers to implement sustainability criteria systematically within local programming workflows.

- **The FMA Action Plan:** Promoted by the Spanish Music Festival Association (FMA) in collaboration with the sustainability department of Gabeiras & Asociados, the action plan titled "*Festivales de Música y Agenda 2030*" establishes a collective framework for the live music industry. This joint initiative provides promoters with a roadmap to adapt large-scale commercial music festivals to specific UN sustainability metrics. The plan directly shapes pre-production, on-site development, and post-event phases, addressing workforce conditions, accessibility, and environmental impact management.

- **Plataforma Jazz España (PJE) and "Re Sostenible":** As a key sectoral network representing jazz festivals and live music venues across Spain, PJE operates a dedicated branch called *Re Sostenible*. This network acts as a reference hub for the live music industry, running specialised panel discussions, maintaining a virtual sustainability library, and actively managing collaborative projects.

- **The Instituto de la Música Digital Sustainability Map:** Launched by the national federation *Es_Música* with support from the Ministry of Culture, the *Instituto de la Música* operates a dedicated digital sustainability platform. The initiative includes an interactive Digital Sustainability Map (*Mapa digital de sostenibilidad*) and a customised ESG Self-Assessment Test specifically built for the entire music value chain—spanning artists, record labels, live venues, managers, and promoters. Instead of relying on rigid checklist metrics, the interactive map allows users to connect specific environmental, social, and governance (ESG) priorities directly to their professional roles. The system diagnoses the user's current operational standing and provides tailored recommendations on key industry hotspots, including audience mobility, energy efficiency, acoustic impact, and digital waste management.

- **The FMA Music Festivals Calculator:** To make carbon accounting accessible without requiring expensive private corporate audits, the FMA provides a free, open-access *Music Festivals Calculator*. Developed alongside their broader action plans, this digital tool allows festival operators to input raw operational data to track their Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, giving promoters a clearer baseline understanding of their event's direct and indirect environmental footprint.

3.8 Comparative Conclusions

Beyond the national approaches detailed in the above case studies, a broader look at the European landscape reveals a growing but uneven effort to integrate environmental sustainability into cultural policies. A comparative review of more than thirty European national cultural strategies[103] indicates that while the ecological transition is widely recognised as an abstract goal, only few countries have translated these strategic ambitions into practical, binding policy measures. The most comprehensive standalone plans remain fairly isolated cases of frontrunners like Catalonia's Pla C or France's CACTE system, while in the majority cases environmental concerns are only mentioned in passing.

[103] The review was done for EMEE's internal report "Environmental sustainability and cultural policy: focus on music mobility" (2025).

This policy gap is also raised by the work of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) expert group on the green transition of the cultural and creative sectors. The OMC's findings, captured in the 2025 report Creative Shifts: Empowering CULTURE for Sustainable Living[104], re-emphasise a dualism: the cultural sector faces a pressing need to mitigate its own ecological footprint—driven by transport and the rapid growth of energy-intensive digital storage—while simultaneously acting (or so we're repeatedly told) as a figurehead for societal transformation. The report notes that "with their proven capacity to foster public awareness, create emotional engagement and inspire behavioural change, culture, creativity and the arts warrant more strategic and ambitious integration into climate action efforts".[105] When mapping these dynamics, public policy approaches tend to split down to two avenues: the greening of operations (reducing the footprint) and infrastructure; and the mobilisation of artistic expression to influence public values and attitudes (the handprint).

3.8.1 Environmental Sustainability in Culture

The comparative analysis of the six case studies shows that reducing the music sector's carbon footprint is shaped by a tension between sectoral readiness and a fragmented and slower-moving public policy landscape. The main comparative takeaways are:

- **Bottom-up initiatives lead policy.** In Finland, Norway, and also Poland, independent music organisations and festivals have developed practical, voluntary tracking tools and climate roadmaps well ahead of national cultural policies.

- **Collecting information on sector realities.** Some national ministries are still in a data-gathering phase. Finland and Ireland use funding application questions or mandatory annual plans primarily as mapping tools to assess sector capacity, while avoiding penalties or funding cuts based on any kind of environmental performance.

- **National frameworks require regional and local implementation.** While comprehensive environmental sustainability policies can be designed and mandated at the national level, their practical implementation will often rely heavily on local administrative actors to adapt to and interpret them within local realities. Coherence between these levels is thus important, but often found lacking.

- **Constraints on mobility options are geographically specific.** Central European rail-travel availability does not transfer to peripheral countries like Finland and Spain, or island contexts like Ireland. In these regions, sometimes vast distances and lack of late-night transport options leave driving or flying as the only alternatives for artists and audiences.

- **Carbon calculators proliferate and create issues of reliability.** The current marketplace contains a variety of public and private carbon calculators. A lack of transparency regarding their underlying data, models and country-specific emission factors makes meaningful data comparison across different European regions difficult.

[104] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2025). Creative shifts – Empowering culture for sustainable living, Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/6678618
[105] ECEAC (2025), p. 3.

3.8.2 Culture in Environmental Sustainability

The comparative analysis also examines the sector's capacity to act as a societal accelerator by using artistic expression to raise public awareness and influence environmental values. The main comparative takeaways are:

- **Rhetorical consensus on culture's role – the handprint argument.** At the strategic policy level, there is a shared consensus that ecological transition requires changes in societal habits. Culture is mostly positioned in an abstract way as something with the inherent potential to drive the needed social transformation of habits, values, attitudes, and behaviour. These arguments, however, mostly remain symbolic and rhetorical with little to no practical steps attached.

- **On an operational level culture often means built heritage.** When high-level strategies are translated into concrete national climate plans, the focus usually narrows to exclude contemporary arts or live music practices. Statutory climate frameworks treat culture almost exclusively through a preservationist lens as physical assets to be protected from weather risks, leaving professional creative practices and sectors under-supported and omitted from state climate mitigation instruments.

- **Funding stability determines organisational capacity to address environmental sustainability concerns.** The ability of music actors to implement sustainability goals depends heavily on national funding stability and political cycles. In jurisdictions undergoing severe public cuts and austerity measures, independent operators face immediate trade-offs where basic financial survival takes precedence over environmental issues. Conversely, in countries with better structured, multiannual public funding music actors have the added confidence of a predictable future outlook and can thus plan strategically and move beyond voluntary project-based initiatives.

4. Thematic analysis of green mobility and co-programming

In order to get a fuller picture of the context for greening artist and audience mobility in Europe, including through scaling co-programming as a principle of action, the case studies of institutional and policy landscapes in six different European countries need to be complemented with insights from sectoral realities. How do artists and agents, venues, festival programmers and promoters experience these issues? While there are plenty of country specific themes, most concerns are to an important degree transnational. Therefore, these insights are not presented by country, but rather by theme with occasional country specific dimensions highlighted. The themes are organised around two focus topics: greening mobility and co-programming as a principle of action.

For this part of the research, 10 focus group discussions and 38 individual interviews were conducted across the six country case studies. Participants were mainly venue operators, festival programmers, agents and artists, though many hold multiple roles as is typical for the sector.

4.1 Greening Mobility

4.1.1 The Knowledge Gap

Climate change and the need for ecological transition is in a general sense known to all, even if opinions on the reasons and the right courses of action might vary. The so-called carbon footprint expressed in tonnes of CO_2 equivalent as a measure for greenhouse gas emissions of various sorts is a well established metaphor. However, only some live music actors, from artists to venues and promoters, have actually gone through the often technical and demanding process of measuring their own carbon footprint in some way. Knowledge, know-how and tools to do that are increasingly publicised, but there is still a lack of clarity and doing a thorough carbon footprint baseline measurement most likely requires an external expert to be hired.

Most of the actors interviewed reported they haven't measured their carbon footprint and would find it difficult to do so without competent help. The knowledge gap is not only about the technical – which tools to use and how – but also conceptual, pertaining to what would the results reveal and how to interpret them, what should they be compared against and why. Knowledge is therefore closely intertwined with motivation and values.

"Of course, I'm aware of climate change, but in terms of the music industry, it's something totally new. And actually, this might be shocking, but while I was traveling, doing tours all over the world for 10 years now, I never had a conversation with anybody about this topic." – Artist.

4.1.2 Values, Interests, and Imperatives

While all respondents agree in principle that live music actors have a responsibility to advance environmental sustainability, their views diverge on how highly individual professionals —including artists, managers, agents, venues, festivals, and promoters—should prioritise this commitment. This variation is mostly due to a combination of personal values, strategic career or business interests, and country specific socio-economic and sectoral factors.

There are forerunners in the live music sector in every country covered in the research. These actors are value driven, prioritising environmental sustainability for its own sake. They might already have green strategies and action plans in place and some degree of experience carrying them out. While there are always practical constraints, these actors don't need motivating, but simply enabling and empowering. Bridging the knowledge and resource gaps can be powerful in these cases as the incentive to act is already there. It's notable that there seem to be differences of value attitudes in age groups. While broad stereotyping would be misleading, older generations overall tend to view these issues as less urgent and are more focused on other aspects than younger generations.

"That was the aim—to organize "green tours," with as little flying as possible and as much train travel and local transport as possible. And that's also the whole point of my company—I try to create the greenest tours possible." – Booking Agent

Others take a more pragmatic view, whether because they don't share the urgency, doubt if they can contribute meaningfully, or consider that others – the bigger polluters and governments – should be the ones taking the lead.

“If you think about the touring industry, it’s still like a drop in the ocean if you think about all the pollution and everything else going on in the world. And so if a major, like, coal industry or whatever, doesn’t do the calculations with their subcontractors, [...] then it’s quite unreasonable to expect a performing artist to calculate everything.” – Promoter

Many recognise that inducing action on scale in the music sector will require the alignment of green actions with economically viable and socially desirable behaviour. Even if environmental sustainability is a shared concern, the practicalities of business determine decisions and priorities for many. For example, established booking practices that are streamlined to be efficient administratively and business wise will not be discontinued simply to choose a greener, but less profitable option. Indeed, sustainable options can often be more costly in terms of the cost of tickets of trains vs flights, but also the extra time on the road. However, if collaboration helps to cut costs the business calculations can change.

"The motivation there has largely been economic. The reason for collaborating is to improve logistics and lower costs in relation to international management. It’s better to present an offer of four or five concerts in [our country] than just one one-off. So the main drive so far has mostly been economics, as I see it."

While there certainly are actors in any sector who are simply focused on commercial interests, there are many more who, while sympathetic to environmental impacts, have to consider the interests of their clients and partners – artists, managers, agents, bookers, etc. In some cases the greener option also might work better financially, but without targeted funding and other incentives as well as regulation and taxing this will never scale across all scenes, genres, sizes, and places.

One way to change behaviour is through regulation, or creating imperatives to opt for greener options as others are made more expensive. Incentives (funding) and disincentives (taxing) will change the calculation of preferable alternatives. That is why some respondents called for a clear policy approach so that everyone would have to play by the same rules. Otherwise, those taking the greener route voluntarily always risk paying extra for their choices and harming their competitiveness. On the other hand, as briefly mentioned earlier in this report, many or most of the venues, promoters, agents and artists involved in this project work within complex and precarious economic frameworks that are already economically risky. Policy should account for these contexts to avoid unwanted effects from regulations.

4.1.3 Measuring, Accounting and Budgeting

Conducting a thorough carbon footprint measurement for an organisation or even an artist tour is a technical process requiring most likely an expert, time and a budget. In order to make this more accessible to live music actors, many online freely available tools and guidelines have been created with varying degrees of rigour in terms of method and detail. While this provides opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to afford a measurement it also has created a plethora of tools with varying degrees of reliability. Experts are concerned that this might create confusion among those with no expert knowledge and also dilute the effectiveness of proper measuring.

"I see many different carbon footprint reports, and it's impossible [to compare them], because some of them include food and beverage, others don't. The scope three is quite open, so there are many things that you can or might not [include]. [...] If they are not verified, you can publish what you want. [...] There is no strict regulation and no one is checking that you have complied with all the data requirements." – Ecology Expert

Measuring itself will provide a result that can be used as a baseline, but it will not provide goals or benchmarks. There are conceptual discontinuities between what was the case (a measurement) and what should be the case (a goal). Organisations such as venues and festivals have at least somewhat repetitive action patterns and there is some use in comparing concert seasons or festival editions over the years, set carbon targets and aim for overall reductions.

Artist tours, however, are unique and also one year in an artist career might be full of travel due to touring with a new album while another is spent working on new music. It is difficult to rationalise a numerical carbon goal for a tour or for an artist career year. Some experts take the view that that is not necessary. Rather, the only useful benchmark is the hypothetical alternative of the tour being planned and the aim is to make as many environmentally sustainable choices as possible and then compare against that counterfactual. A set of principles and guidelines, rather than a hard carbon budget, is what can be used by artists in practice.

The principles and guidelines approach is much simpler and cheaper – assuming that others have done the rigorous experimenting and research to validate these. However, it does not provide a clear framework of unambiguous numerical targets that would allow tracking and also publicising progress. This, however, can be a crucial tool to mobilise actors to take action and also hold them accountable.

Measuring, monitoring and reporting is also the basis to receive a certification which can be an important way to communicate to your audiences, clients and partners that you prioritise environmental sustainability. While there are certification systems increasingly tailored to particular sectors, many established schemes are not and results can be problematic.

"When we went through re-certification, we were criticised for a 100% increase in use of stage smoke. It turned out we'd gone from half a kilo to one kilo over a whole year. That's meaningless in the bigger picture. [...]. It shows that what they're doing isn't really adapted to our sector. I imagine others encounter similar absurdities." – Festival Representative

4.1.4 The Capacity Gap

The extra work needed to carry out any kind of carbon footprint measurement as well as planning, budgeting, monitoring, accounting and also reporting to funders and partners is a significant administrative burden, and for the many micro-organisations in the live music sector is simply beyond their capabilities. This highlights a much discussed issue of balancing expanding expectations with structural support. If the venues, festivals and companies are fighting for survival in terms of economic viability, they cannot be expected to take on additional responsibilities unless the needed extra resources are provided. As seen from the policy analysis case studies there might often be a gap between those aspects when, for

example, venues are required to improve their infrastructure, but the funding they get is limited to artistic programming, etc.

In addition to the sheer capacity of doing extended tasks, the issue of perceived meaningfulness is also a factor. If the funders require additional plans and reports on how the music actors are tackling environmental sustainability in their work, including providing measurement reports, action plans, etc., there needs to be a tangible outcome or at least some sort of reaction to these efforts. Otherwise it can seem as a formal bureaucratic requirement and turn into a box-ticking exercise.

Aware of the limited capacity of especially smaller actors and the risks of creating extra burdens, several funding bodies covered in the research are approaching this carefully, gradually and with a sensitivity to context. However, clear communication is needed to ensure that when the funders are asking environmental sustainability plans or simply descriptions of green actions for information gathering purposes, the actors that need to supply them will not think it's an empty bureaucratic exercise.

"Asking organisations like us to do a climate policy without any guidance, means that [we] are going to go to the internet, find other climate policies, [...] copying and pasting from around the world [...] That is not a climate policy. [...] Quite often, when it comes to policy, a lot of organisations are like, why am I even doing this? Why am I sending these figures? I don't ever see anything back... It just seems like more drudgery." – Venue Representative

4.1.5 Geography and variable transport Infrastructure

There are many simplistic green mobility guidelines that list "good" transport options against the "bad". One of the main reasons these are criticised by music actors as well as ecology experts is that they are mostly context blind. Available alternatives for transport are very different if you're moving from Brussels in Belgium, Tampere in Finland, or Cork in Ireland. There are at least three themes with regards to geographic and infrastructure variables: long-distance transport options, micro-mobility (the "last mile"), and different sources of electricity.

Long-distance travel

Those working in countries or regions that are islands literally – Ireland, Mallorca, Menorca, Greek islands – or figuratively, such as Finland (the remoteness was sometimes referred to "as if being on an island") cannot avoid flights as easily or at all as well as those living in well-connected central European areas. Seeking to ban or publicly shame flying would thus simply reinforce already uneven circumstances. All decisions must be seen in context. More nuanced approaches to "deep mobility "[106] or "green mobility"[107] emphasise the need to take context into account and instead of crude general rules encourage applying decision making procedures that seek to make the underlying reasoning of why any travel is necessary explicit and articulate. It is not about not flying as much as having good reasons to fly.

[106] See Elfing, T. (2022). Mobility Practices in Transition. In: Vidović, D, Duxbury, N. (Eds.). I-Portunus Houses: Volume 1. Mobility in Culture: Conceptual Frameworks and Approaches. Kultura Nova Foundation. 88-107. Available: https://culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IPH_V1.pdf.

[107] See for example On The Move's Sustainability Policy: "Green mobility is understood in a holistic way. It not only considers the means of transportation used by artists and culture professionals but also the contexts in which artists and culture professionals are evolving, the reasons behind their mobility, and the impacts of what is done at their destination and upon return to their local context." Source: https://on-the-move.org/about/sustainability-policy.

Also, it depends how wide we draw the context frame. A venue representative describes the following example:

“The question is how we calculate carbon footprints and what we should take into account. As an example, I book two guys from one of the poorest ghettos in one of the poorest countries in the world. Their daily carbon footprint is really low because they don't have electricity, they don't have a washing machine, they don't have a dishwasher. So I think that they can take the plane every year to come to Europe. Me, on the other hand, I live in Europe with a European lifestyle. I will always have a larger carbon footprint than them. So maybe we should take these things into account, or perhaps we don't have that choice?” – Venue Representative [paraphrased]

Sources of electricity

While rail travel generally emits significantly less greenhouse gas than flying, the net environmental benefit depends heavily on the carbon intensity of the national electricity grid. France relies primarily on nuclear energy to power its high-speed rail network (TGV), resulting in exceptionally low operational emissions. Conversely, in countries like Malta, Cyprus, Poland and Estonia, where the electricity grid remains heavily dependent on coal or other fossil fuels, the carbon footprint of electric rail travel is substantially higher. The overall trend, however, is clearly towards cleaner electricity, at least in Europe.[108]

Micro-mobility and instrument restrictions

While long-distance rail travel can provide a viable lower-carbon alternative to flying, the main logistical difficulty for touring artists often occurs within cities, whether in transit between long distance or the “last mile” to the venue. The design of urban public transport systems is generally poorly suited to the practical needs of musicians traveling with instruments. Moving large and often heavy instruments and equipment—such as double basses, saxophones, cymbal cases and amplifiers—through automated metro gates and crowded pedestrian tunnels during train changes is a challenge for musicians.

This micro-mobility bottleneck is further complicated by unpredictable luggage regulations of rail operators, which can restrict the size or number of instruments permitted on board. Due to these extra challenges, many artists and booking agents choose to avoid public rail networks for mid-distance European tours. Instead, they increasingly prefer using local (if possible then electric) vehicles, which offer better control over the routing and ensure delicate musical gear is transported safely.

“[On our] tour, we started in the Netherlands and worked our way down through France. A specific double bass, plus we had to change trains in the middle of Paris and into the metro. Walk through those gates on the metro and carry the bass and suitcases... It was complete mayhem. So from the musician’s standpoint, in those big cities it’s totally crazy to travel on the metro with four suitcases and a bass and saxophone and cymbals. It’s not easy. But in Poland, where the trains are bigger and there’s luggage space, and also on the buses, or that you can drive an electric car, it works very well." – Artist

[108] Useful sources of information include: Greenhouse gas emission intensity of electricity generation in Europe | Indicators | European Environment Agency (EEA) for European comparative measures and EcoPassenger | UIC for calculation.

4.1.6 Holistic view and tradeoffs between creative, economic, social and environmental aspects

As already mentioned, the green transport alternatives as well as other additional efforts can be more expensive and therefore raise the issue of trade-offs and looking at the bigger picture. There are two perspectives to this. One about pragmatic cost-benefit reasoning and the other about a more holistic view to practice where the concerns of environmental sustainability are only one dimension.

In the pragmatic perspective the financial viability of a tour or venue determines the ultimate boundaries of taking green aspects into account in decision-making. While promoters and artists express genuine alignment with environmental goals, they are constrained by the realities of the live music market that cannot always absorb higher financial and time costs of sustainable transport alternatives. For independent operators and smaller venues, this means that voluntary green routing is frequently dismissed as an unfeasible business choice, as it forces them to choose between financial survival and environmental ideals.

"One aspect is important. It's from the point of view of musicians. [...] It's important not to refuse an interesting gig if it's paid well, even if it's a one shot. Because, you know how difficult it is for a freelancer to earn a living. So refusing a good gig only for ecological reasons? I don't have money for that." – Tour Organiser

The second perspective involves a broader, more holistic view of live music practice, where environmental sustainability represents just one thread in a complex web of creative, social, career and business-related responsibilities. Music actors point out that focusing exclusively on carbon emissions neglects other dimensions of sustainability, such as cultural decentralisation, artist well-being, and community access to art. True sustainability in the live music ecosystem, as seen by quite a few respondents, requires balancing the carbon footprint of travel against the social benefits of bringing diverse international talent to remote areas that would otherwise remain isolated from the wider European cultural sphere. In this view, a successful project cannot be judged solely by a low emission figure; it must also be evaluated by its long-term social and cultural value.

"[It's important to have] immediate access to kind of the newest groove coming from Europe, [also in] very rural [areas] where people just wouldn't encounter it. It's actually beneficial to us because it adds to our programme, [...] it completely broadens our sphere." – Venue Operator

4.2. Co-programming

4.2.1 Co-programming as a collective action problem

The challenge of making tours more environmentally sustainable through co-programming is that it requires sustained and dynamic cooperation between several key parties – the artists and managers, agents and tour organisers, and all the programmers of venues and festivals that connect to one artist's tour, and these might be many. Inserting additional considerations, such as environmental sustainability, into an already elaborate negotiation and coordination process is not easy. In a system where no one party is in charge, all parties can feel that the responsibility to make tough decisions lie elsewhere. It is challenging even if all parties want

the same thing – a greener tour – and very difficult when some don't share this concern. Due to the distributed nature of decision making it is impossible to identify leverage points or key nodes in the network that could be controlled or incentivised to influence the whole process.

From one perspective, the artist is at the center connecting all other parties. Indeed, very successful artists have the negotiation power to dictate terms and also the means to invest in how they build up their shows. For example, Massive Attack[109] and Coldplay[110] have garnered attention with their focus on lowering the carbon emissions of their live touring, publicising commitments as well as working with credible research partners. However, almost all other artists are not in the position to champion grand scale projects or dictate ambitiously green terms. Given the precarity of artist careers with even the live performance faltering in recent years, artists often have to accept what is available.

Some venue and festival programmers feel that it is often the bigger agencies representing commercially more ambitious artists that are not willing to adapt their tour building logic. Then again, some artists, tour producers and agents feel that the ultimate power is with the venues and festivals. The Better Live project has shown that with extra coordination and also funding collaborative approaches can be strengthened and even new networks developed.

"If you wanted a way to get European bands into the clubs, this kind of collaboration is exactly it. Otherwise... In [our town], for example, if we were to pay to fly people in from Europe just to play [here], that's silly. People used to do that before, but today... It's not sustainable in any way." – Programmer

Network capacity

Changing established ways of working constitutes an extra administrative cost and as shown by the Better Live project, it takes an active network of partners with mostly aligned interests. Furthermore, someone needs to lead the collective process and facilitate finding solutions to the many frictions addressed in subsequent sections. Being part of and contributing to a network needs to pay off and even in the best cases it will require some tradeoffs.

In some of the countries Better Live project experiments were conducted there were already some local networks in place and their ways of working well-worn. In other places, the whole idea of collaborating in tour building was for many a novel idea. In general, the takeaway has been that the networks approach of co-programming works. However, working in and through networks is its own competence and requires skills and resources, both financial and working hours. Aligned values, but also mutual understanding is required. Then perhaps some of the friction points can be overcome.

"I think promoters and festivals should be more aware than they are about getting artists on tour. It's craftsmanship. [...] When I'm contacting people, I try to put myself into their place. It's the basis of working in a network to understand what the promoter will need, without changing

[109] See the foundational *Super-Low Carbon Live Music: A Roadmap for the UK Live Music Sector* (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 2021) and the subsequent empirical assessment of the August 2024 proof-of-concept festival *ACT 1.5* (Tyndall Centre / University of Manchester, 2025), available at https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/tyndall-centre-roadmap-helps-deliver-lowest-carbon-live-music-event-of-its-kind/.

[110] For details on Coldplay's touring emissions reductions — including a 59% decrease in direct CO2e emissions compared to their 2016–17 stadium tour, savings from sustainable aviation fuel purchases, and independent verification by the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative — see Tour Emissions Update (Coldplay, June 2024), available at https://www.coldplay.com/emissions-update/.

[my needs]. [...] Therefore, also promoters should develop collaborations with local networks, and also understand that sometimes you can do a concert with less." – Tour Operator

Conceptual shift to longer time horizons

Building longer tours also requires something of a conceptual shift away from efficiency of time use to a more measured pace allowing the artists to connect to the places they visit more deeply. This is at the heart of the deep mobility concept. If the tour routing will not allow for concerts every night, other types of activities might be added, such as educational (e.g. workshops) or creative, such as residencies. This kind of thinking is akin to a paradigm shift and brings its own set of tradeoffs. It's possible that deep mobility is not for everyone.

4.2.2 Exclusivity and artistic diversity

One of the key friction points that surfaced in the discussions was the well-established principle of exclusivity clauses introduced by bigger venues and festivals. Contractual agreements preventing an artist from performing nearby during a specific timeframe and geographical radius protect promoters from losing audience, but they also present a direct obstacle to co-programming. Some believe that the changing times are making exclusivity obsolete or simply unviable.

"Of course, I collaborate with everybody, and [...] I want to be open to collaborations. [...] But the ego of [some] promoters, they said, 'Yes, I want to be the only one to do this'. Forget about this. Now we are living in another era. We want to work on another level." – Tour Operator

However, in addition to the economic arguments of exclusivity there are others. Many artistic directors of festivals want to curate a unique programme and thus distinguish the profile of their event. While in some cases accusations of egotism might be raised there is also another side. A club might have a sufficiently distinct artistic profile that even if there are other venues around their choices simply don't overlap artistically. Thus even without maximum collaborativeness diversity in artistic profiles will be a constraint to maximally optimised co-programming.

Singular persons and their artistic profiles aside, intensive co-programming across large regional networks also risks cultural homogenisation and "artistic gentrification". This could occur when massive regional networks—a mostly theoretical construct now, but possible if Better Live's approach is truly scaled—coordinate to anchor a single, shared tour itinerary and cause identical artists to dominate an entire territory, meaning individual venues risk losing their distinct artistic profiles and regional specificity. To safeguard exclusivity and local identity, booking networks might then consciously balance highly efficient and optimal routing with less collaborative experimental programming.

"There should be diversity [..], so that it doesn't become completely similar and one type of music takes over. Some [concerts] should be narrow, some accessible... Yes, you can of course have the problem that it becomes a bit similar, that all 16 clubs... one, two, three, four or five similar concerts. And it becomes a bit... gentrified. But if we are conscious in the booking [...] it can also go the other way—that especially through Better Live we suddenly offered a club in [a small place] a concert with an international [artist]"

4.2.3 Planning and timescales

Co-programming and routing are constrained by two further issues related to time. First, the different types of cultural entities plan on very different timescales. State-subsidised institutions, such as operas or national theatres, programme their seasons two to four years in advance. In contrast, independent jazz networks and smaller clubs operate on much shorter notice. Late-stage network offers frequently miss these time windows entirely. To resolve this timeline mismatch, collaborative booking networks must synchronise their communication and align their planning lifecycles at least six months earlier, but ultimately planning on different time scales will remain a natural part of the diversity of the sector.

The second issue is that in many places live music can only be viably presented at the weekends. While a network can easily coordinate consecutive dates from Friday to Sunday, filling the weekdays in between becomes an operational challenge. This creates a structural bottleneck for slow touring models, as not all venues cannot attract local audiences or guarantee financial viability on weekdays. A remedy can then be adding other types of artistic events and activities in the tour, from workshops to residencies.

4.2.4 Costs and benefits of co-programming

To some degree, optimising tours should offer cost saving opportunities as travel costs and international management expenses can be shared across a network. There have long been such collaborations between various summer festivals, but these exist on a much higher commercial level, operating between bigger operators and over longer distances. In those setups, flying remains common, and therefore such co-programming loses its ecological aspect.

For smaller actors, the motivation for joining a project like Better Live lies in gaining access to the resources needed to make progress on environmental actions, balanced against the reality that their own resources to implement and assess green initiatives are highly limited. Interviews show that even with the project funding the fundamental driver for cross-border co-programming remains economic rather than ecological. Joint booking is primarily used to split management costs and mitigate the financial loss of single, one-off international performances.

At the same time, playing in smaller regional places means artists often have to make compromises with their fees. Alternatively, an external subsidy system is required to bolster these fees so artists do not harm their already strained earning capacity. The subsidy system used in Better Live provided this structural benefit, allowing small, regional, or rural jazz clubs—which normally lack the financial capacity to book international artists—to bypass commercial barriers and bring high-quality European talent directly to remote communities.

However, organising co-programmed tours remains difficult even with heavy external support. In the Better Live project, despite active co-programming and cost-sharing efforts, some 60% of the costs still needed to be subsidised by European funds. Furthermore, the additional coordination work required to manage these networks creates extra administrative labor, which requires financial cover as someone has to do the job. This management layer must also be covered by special funding, yet relying on public grants introduces operational friction

due to long decision-making timelines and increasingly extreme competition for project funding both nationally and on a European level.

"The proposals go in a long time before but the results [...] take a long time to come back. [We] applied in October, 2023 and the results came back at the end of April, 2024, so like seven months. But [these] seven months [...] you can't plan anything because you don't know if you have the money or not..." — Festival Programmer

Finally, the internal financial dynamics of these networks present their own hurdles. It is possible that the bigger members of a co-programming network must assume a larger share of the financial burden or infrastructure costs to keep the circuit viable, an imbalance that larger operators may not be interested in sustaining over the long term unless specifically incentivised.

4.2.5 The human costs of longer touring

A key feature in greener travels is that they often represent options that require more time and perhaps more planning. The concept is discussed in ways that resonate with theories on slow travels or slow tourism, with a focus on enjoying the journey, slow mobility, mental health, and environmental sustainability. There is an expressed tension here between the focus of venues or promoters, who see opportunities for expanding local artistic potentials through residencies and local collaborations, and artists, who often express a need to remain efficient and work.

For musicians, the primary friction of these longer and slower itineraries is the strain they place on their private lives and families. Spending extended periods on the road to avoid flying or to complete dense regional circuits directly impacts personal relationships and caretaking responsibilities, making slow touring a challenge or a difficult tradeoff on a human level.

“[Some] artists, they want a tour, but then there are artists who have families and they can’t be away for too long. So that’s something that I always need to know. How long are you willing to stay away from home? It might be two or three weeks or something like that, not half a year...” – Agent

"If you’re not going to fly at all and you’re doing a tour in Germany, you have to add two or three extra days of driving or train travel. Days people could potentially have been working on other things. And everyone has family and kids and... I can’t justify being away from the family for three extra days just because I’m going to take the train. My wife would understand the point, but it would make it even harder to have a musician as a husband, in a way." – Artist

Making tours longer introduces the problem of off-days, particularly on Mondays and Tuesdays when ticket sales are traditionally weak. From a promoter or booking network perspective, these gaps are often viewed as ideal opportunities to expand local artistic value through residencies, school workshops, or masterclasses to generate secondary income and cover hotel costs. For less established artists, residency collaborations with local musicians also offer a practical door to new territories. However, when these days cannot be filled with paid activity, they become a direct financial liability for the touring party, as accommodation and food costs continue while income stops.

"It is not good for the [economics of the tour] to have off-days. Because you stay in hotels, you can't go home, nothing is free." – Artist

"I think the main thing here for me is to get the contacts and to know more people but also about the slow touring I think it's a very good idea not only for ecological reasons but also for mental health [...] But it's like this kind of touring is more about having an adventure or vacation maybe. So it's really cool. Slow touring is good because it's a very anti-capitalistic thing to do as well." – Artist

The data shows a distinct generational divide regarding this pacing. While some younger musicians view slow touring as an appealing, less hurried experience that benefits mental health and offers a restful alternative to exhausting airport transits, full-time mid-career professionals often cannot afford to treat a tour as an adventure. Because many jazz musicians participate in multiple projects and depend on continuous income, they cannot easily absorb unbooked days. Furthermore, prolonged overland transit can cause physical exhaustion that actively undermines performance quality.

"... so we tried taking the train the whole way [...] Seventeen hours. Just to avoid flying. But now, when I travel much more than I did back then, it becomes too exhausting to always do that. And you feel it when you arrive—that as a musician you can't [...] deliver as good a concert as when you've had a shorter travel day. The more you travel, the harder it becomes to do it in a climate-friendly way." – Artist

"Older musicians want to work every night. They want to make the most of every day. [F]ees aren't that high [and] one day without a gig is one day without income. [...] Most of the musicians we present are professionals. Many jazz musicians are part of several projects and depend on staying in work. They don't have much time to 'be slow'." – Presenter

To resolve these frictions and bridge the gap between ecological travel and artist career viability, funding mechanisms must adapt. If networks expect artists to choose more expensive and time-consuming overland transport or to extend their stays, support schemes must directly account for the fact that environmentally friendly choices reduce immediate income opportunities and increase overhead costs.

5. Policy Analysis and Dilemmas

In addition to the many aspects of both greening mobility and co-programming outlined in the previous chapter, the potential role of policy was raised regularly. Given the complex nature of these challenges, no easy policy solutions exist and thus no fully formed policy proposals were surfaced by the sector actors. Among the more straightforward expectations is extra funding to help cover the additional costs that are likely to accrue when aiming for more sustainable tour building and also clear rules and expectations for everyone – this would increase fairness as well as certainty of planning.

The task before the policymakers to design effective and realistic policy interventions is a difficult one. In this chapter, some of the more salient themes are outlined and then four dilemmas are conceptualised. Each dilemma presents a scale between two extreme choices

or attitudes. All policy interventions must find balancing points for each at any given time and fitting to the particular context of a country or region.

5.1. Expectations from and Challenges of Policymaking for Green Mobility in Music

5.1.1 Expectations to Policymakers from Sector Actors

Many music sector actors expect politicians and policymakers to be proactive in the space of the ecological transition of culture, creating both regulative constraints and demands as well as empowering and incentivising the sector to transition to more sustainable practices. Making a change is seen as the responsibility of the political level as well as within their capacity to do so. With authority comes responsibility.

A key expectation is to make the **policy space clear** and more straightforward. Understandable rules and conditions that remain consistent over reasonable timelines help everyone adjust and act with more certainty. There are several aspects to this.

- **Policy coherence across levels and domains**. As also found in the policy landscape mapping, it can often be the case where requirements on one level, for example national or federal, are not supported or perhaps even contradicted in other levels, such as local or regional. Policy consistency, both internal, vertical as well as horizontal, should be a systemic goal.[111]

- **Balanced expectations**. When setting environmental conditions and requirements for music sector actors (e.g. venues and festivals), solid analysis is needed into whether these actors actually have the capacity to meet those requirements. It is possible that such demands are complemented by support measures but that is often not the case.

- **Meaningful engagement and monitoring**. When rules are set but compliance is not monitored, it turns quickly into a purely formal box-ticking exercise. Rules also need to be set with sufficient knowledge of the sectoral realities and policymakers are expected to be able to consult the sector regularly and stay informed. Sector actors are often willing to make the extra effort to comply, but it needs to be justified and meaningful.

- **Context-sensitive policy instruments.** There should be a good balance between coercive instruments such as regulations and taxes as well as incentives such as funding programmes supporting greening activities. Eco-conditionality for international support measures is expected, though finding the right design is key.

Balanced expectations relate to broader **fairness**. Culture is widely evoked in sustainable development policy as having the potential to drive or lead the transformations – the handprint

[111] Based on Lesley Pal's policy consistency framework, internal consistency refers to the alignment among the core elements of a policy, specifically its problem definition, goals, and chosen instruments. Vertical consistency requires that the specific activities and operational measures undertaken derive logically from those policy goals and can be reasonably expected to fulfil them. Horizontal consistency extends this requirement across the wider policy space, ensuring alignment and compatibility across different policy fields rather than solely within a single domain. Cf. Pal, L. (2014). *Beyond Policy Analysis – Public Issue Management in Turbulent Times*. Fifth Edition, Nelson Education, Toronto.

argument. Yet, it can only be possible if the cultural sectors themselves can function reasonably well. Calling for symbolic transformative action in the context of serious funding cuts that harm even the basic operational capacity can create cognitive dissonance in the sector.

Another aspect to this is often heightened public scrutiny of artists and cultural organisations with regards to their greening efforts while the truly large polluters continue unchallenged. This is also true within the music sector itself. Discussing how a jazz musician can travel via public transport to avoid flights in the context of tens of thousands of fans flying to the concerts of Taylor Swift or Adele can seem grotesquely unbalanced. Therefore, policy action is sometimes expected to be scale-dependent. It's important to provide more demanding and stricter rules to the major actors while providing flexibility to the smaller and not vice versa.

5.1.2 Challenges to Policymaking

Tackling the impacts of climate change in the cultural sphere requires participative and co-creative policy making, as no single actor holds all the answers or the needed agency to drive systemic change.[112] This is particularly evident when setting public policy for the live music sector. While voluntary initiatives—such as calculators, guidelines, and certification schemes—have historically driven the green transition, they frequently place an unproportionate amount of responsibility on individual forward-looking organisations and companies. Achieving society-wide adoption of greener practices most likely requires comprehensive public regulations and actions to level the playing field, fund ecological projects, and establish trusted standards for measuring carbon footprints. However, attempts to address contemporary music practices through public policy reveal several systemic challenges.

The first major challenge stems from the fact that, as already mentioned above, artist mobility and international touring function fundamentally as a **collective action problem**. A typical artist tour comes together as a collaborative, negotiated effort balancing a variety of factors, meaning that accountability for its environmental footprint is diffuse and responsibility for taking action is not easily assigned. For policymakers, this diffuse accountability creates a challenge, as there is no single regulatory target or centralised node in the live music network that can be leveraged to influence the entire system. Making touring more environmentally sustainable requires the coordination and cooperation of artists, tour managers, agents, bookers, and venue programmers to optimise routing and facilitate longer, slower travel. Aligning these diverse incentives is highly complex, leaving policymakers with the difficult task of intervention in a system where no single party is in charge and all parties can feel that the responsibility to make tough decisions lies elsewhere. As outlined earlier, attempting to correct tour organising toward more sustainable practices implicates many other constraints—such as limited resources, time pressures, geographic isolation, and festival exclusivity clauses—creating an endless chain of impact and intervention where a policy directive in one area inadvertently causes friction in another. Because these complex, "wicked" problems have no final solution, policy strategies must be designed to mitigate impacts by directly involving the implicated music actors in policy co-creation, ensuring they are incentivised to coordinate their actions favourably.

[112] Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2025). Robust governance of the local green co-creation in turbulent times. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration, 1*–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/23276665.2025.2492612.

The second challenge is that governments currently **lack the dedicated resources and expert capacity** required to effectively manage green issues within specific creative sectors. As demonstrated across various European contexts, central ministries and funding institutions are often engaged in basic information collection rather than advanced policy design, primarily because they lack dedicated environmental sustainability units or in-house expertise. Designing and implementing effective policy instruments—such as flexible eco-conditionality or targeted funding frameworks—requires deep structural knowledge about the sectors. Without adequate internal administrative capacity, public authorities cannot properly consult stakeholders, test pilot policies, or scale up successful initiatives. This resource gap leads then to a reliance on voluntary, sector-developed tools that might be difficult to maintain over longer time periods or to integrate them into governmental policy frameworks.

Third, a critical challenge for effective policymaking is the ongoing **lack of detailed information and foundational research regarding the music sector's internal dynamics**. To design realistic interventions, policymakers need a clearer understanding of how the (live) music ecosystem operates, including its economic realities, professional networks, and logistical workflows. Gathering granular data remains logistically difficult; for instance, determining country-specific emission factors for different modes of transport is complicated, and tracking audience mobility is frequently hindered by impractical data collection methods.

In spite of these challenges, public policy intervention is perceived as much needed. In summary, the key approaches to policy intervention for an environmentally sustainable music sector are:

- Measure the carbon footprint of entire sectors, set goals and track progress over time.
- Provide trusted standards and processes for measuring, accounting and reporting the carbon footprint and other impacts.
- Create or fund and legitimise tools and frameworks for strategising transition trajectories and certification schemes to validate, publicise and promote commitment and progress.
- Provide broad-based requirements for the whole sector to level the playing field between early adopters and those otherwise not motivated to shift their production and consumption patterns.
- Provide funding for projects in the area of ecological transition. For example, in the music sector supporting venue renovations.
- Provide specific conditions for public support, such as incentivise greener touring.
- Provide and validate trusted information and run or fund awareness campaigns.

5.2 Four Policy Dilemmas

Given the challenges to policymaking, the policymakers need to navigate four policy dilemmas. These dilemmas signify areas of decision making where the right tradeoff points cannot be prescribed generally, but need to be found and dynamically maintained in any given policy context.

Dilemma 1: Lead and regulate vs follow and empower

Taking a proactive regulatory stance is justified because the government is the only actor with sufficient structural authority and leverage to drive broad, sector-wide changes across the live music sector. Formal regulation cuts through the fragmentation of voluntary initiatives and (ideally) establishes clear rules and targets that provide increased certainty for all sector actors who can then adjust their long-term operations. Furthermore, a top-down regulatory approach increases fairness by treating all actors equally. Without statutory rules that assign responsibility across the entire sector, forward-looking organisations that adopt green practices voluntarily are, in the long term, left bearing unequal administrative and financial burdens. Meanwhile, less cooperative competitors can ignore these responsibilities entirely and gain an unfair market advantage by directing their resources solely toward commercial growth.

On the other hand, choosing to follow and empower the sector is necessary when public authorities lack the specialised information required to design effective policy interventions. Because the live music ecosystem relies on highly complex, idiosyncratic networks, top-down policies created without deep sectoral knowledge can easily miss the mark, harm sectoral activities while failing to achieve actual environmental goals. By focusing instead on empowering policies—such as targeted funding, strategic incentives, and capacity-building grants—policymakers can leverage the existing expertise of sector practitioners who already know what changes are practical and viable within their specific scenes. A supportive approach that follows the sector's lead avoids the severe political and bureaucratic pushback triggered by rigid rules, creating instead an environment of organic, collaborative transition rather than defensive compliance.

Dilemma 2: Measure and report vs principles of action

Prioritising rigorous measurement and formal reporting provides an empirical baseline that is essential for tracking objective emission reductions and ensuring accountability. Requiring regular carbon accounting across live music activities creates verifiable data that allows funding bodies and governments to evaluate the actual impact of public subsidies over time. This approach establishes a transparent framework where organisations must prove their progress, making it possible to reward progress or punish persistent non-compliance. Without clear reporting mechanisms, public policy risks operating in an “information vacuum”, unable to determine if green policies and investments are generating real impact.

On the other hand, focusing on practical principles of action acknowledges that meticulous carbon accounting creates an excessive administrative burden, particularly for micro-organisations and independent touring artists who lack the capacity for complex data collection. Because every tour itinerary and live production is fundamentally unique, attempting to enforce rigid numerical reduction targets can be conceptually flawed and unfeasible in practice. A policy framework built around flexible principles—such as prioritising rail travel where and when possible—provides actionable guidance that actors can easily adapt to their ways of working. This approach focuses on enabling visible shifts on the ground, rather than burdening the sector's limited time and budget on hiring external experts to complete formalised reporting requirements. However, relying on principles only means that progress remains untrackable.

Dilemma 3: Comparability and standards vs context-sensitivity and flexibility

Strict standards and universal benchmarks are crucial for meaningful comparability across the entire sectoral landscape. Establishing standardised measurement tools and harmonised reporting criteria makes it possible to compare an emission report generated by a festival in one country with one from a venue in another. Consistent standards would prevent the confusion caused by an increasing number of available calculators with different transparency about their structure, logic and underlying references (e.g. which emission factors are being used, etc.). For public policy makers, centralised standards provide a conceptually clear and transparent framework to design policies and evaluate projects more equitably, track macro-level progress, and ensure that all funded entities are judged based on the same baseline.

However, over-emphasising universal standards can result in a rigid policy design that ignores the critical geographic and infrastructural differences shaping local music scenes. Forcing a venue in an isolated island region or a sparsely populated country to meet the same transport and accessibility benchmarks as an operator in a hyper-connected central European rail hub creates an unviable and unfair expectation. A context-sensitive approach recognises that sustainable choices must be evaluated based on local realities. This provides the administrative flexibility needed to accommodate varying national infrastructures and unique constraints. Using adaptable criteria and context-sensitive policy design, policymakers can avoid inadvertently isolating remote communities or undermining the viability of independent operators working outside wealthy metropolitan centers.

Dilemma 4: Narrow focus on green vs holistic multi-dimensional approach to sustainability

Restricting the policy lens to a narrow focus on environmental and green indicators allows public policy makers to target the climate crisis with more clarity and precision. By isolating the reduction of carbon footprints as the primary objective, it is easier (or rather less difficult though still challenging) to design targeted instruments that direct resources into relevant interventions, such as venue energy infrastructure upgrades or green transport incentives. This focus prevents environmental targets from being diluted or obscured by competing social or economic agendas. It takes the need for an ecological transition in culture seriously and seeks to ensure that rules and measures are aligned with the binding, non-negotiable decarbonisation goals fixed in the high-level climate legislation, either on national or EU levels.

In contrast, a more holistic approach to the sustainability concept argues that environmental progress cannot be achieved in isolation from the broader social, cultural, and economic dimensions of sustainability. The live music sector is characterised by high professional precarity, low and unstable wages, and very narrow operational margins for many working in the grassroots level of the sector. Imposing demanding green regulations without considering these underlying vulnerabilities risks overwhelming independent cultural actors with bureaucratic tasks. Furthermore, a policy framework built on a multi-dimensional approach to sustainability can balance carbon-reduction targets against essential cultural goals, such as safeguarding artistic diversity, maintaining international career viability, and protecting local community access to live music. By treating ecological transformation as an interconnected

aspect of sector health, policymakers can ensure that greening strategies enhance, rather than harm, the social and economic resilience of the cultural sectors.

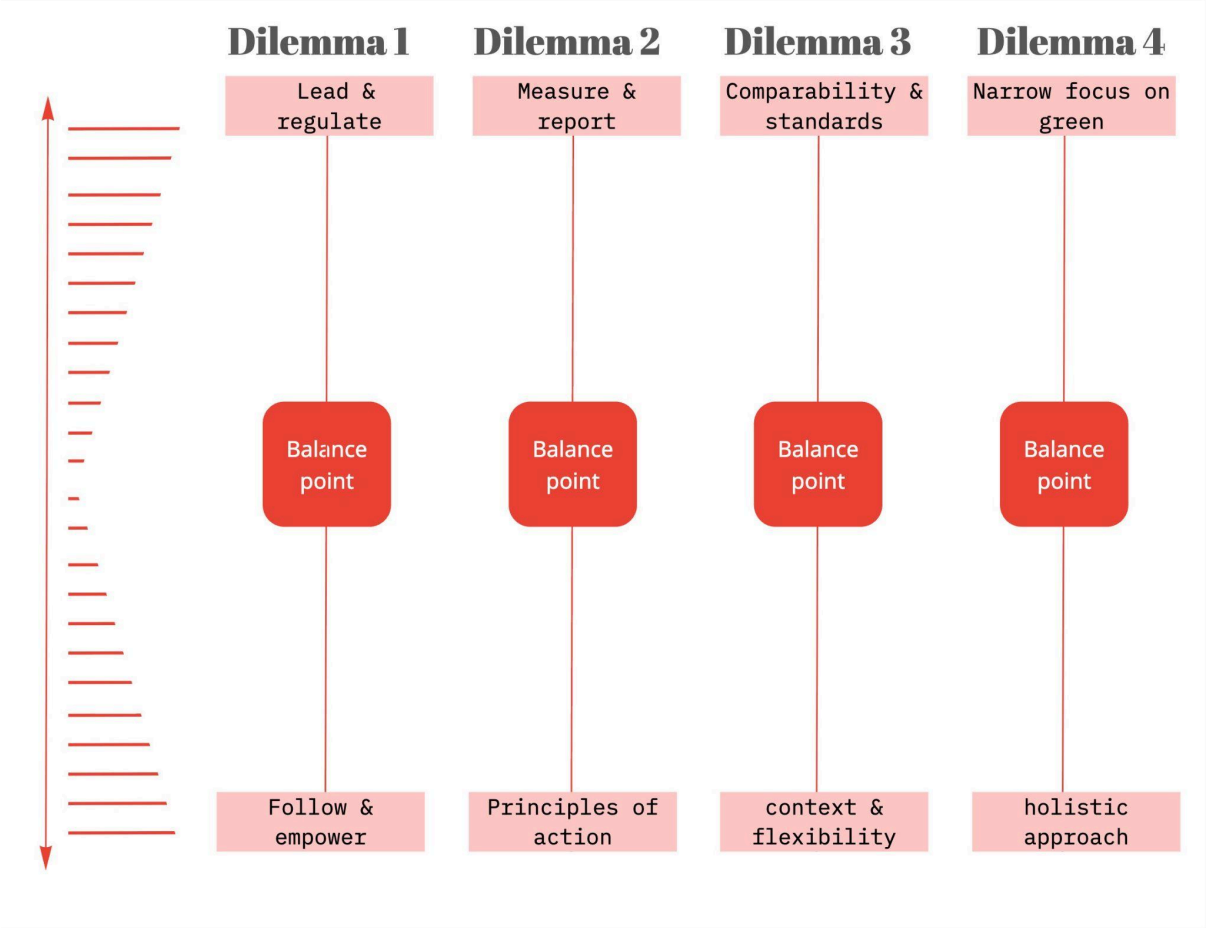

Figure 15. Four policymaking dilemmas.

6. Policy Recommendations

The task before policymakers to integrate environmental sustainability concerns into music [cultural] policy meaningfully and with a realistic implementation plan is challenging, as policy designs cannot be generic nor transferred directly from one country or region to another. Navigating the complex policy dilemmas outlined above, public authorities need to have updated information and solid understanding of the music sector in their particular jurisdiction. Only then can an ambitious, but coherent and realistic policy plan be designed that includes targeted support, investment, and scale-dependent regulations. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for integrating environmental sustainability and co-programming as a principle of action into live music sectors across Europe. It must be emphasised that the articulation is general and cannot be used for direct implementation. Translation and adaptation into local institutional and sectoral realities is needed.

1. **Map the needs, awareness, attitudes, and capacity of the music sector actors to engage with ecological transition**

   Given the delicate balance needed between regulative measures and incentives, having a contextual understanding of the overall workings of the live music sector and actors in a policy jurisdiction is needed. This starts with having basic mapping of the main actors and their key characteristics, such as in the case of venues the number of concerts, capacity, audience size and structure, stylistic orientation and funding models. With regards to profiling for ecological transformation readiness, it's necessary to know whether a carbon footprint analysis has been done, does the organisation have a dedicated person or inhouse expertise, do they have an action plan and what actions have been taken. Given that a lot of the qualitative information needs to be collected via interviews and assessing the current state of the infrastructure (in the case of venues) needs expertise, the most effective way is to commission a thorough one-off research project that would create the baseline mapping and work out a more streamlined information collection protocol for future annual updates.

   Example: Arts and Culture Norway first conducted a thorough mapping of the entire cultural sector and only then designed a policy programme with an action plan.

2. **Create the needed capacity and expertise within the appropriate government organisations**

   Designing and implementing tailored policy instruments requires specialised in-house expertise that general administrative staff within cultural ministries or funding bodies rarely possess. Without dedicated personnel, public authorities cannot adequately consult the sector, run pilot policies, or evaluate the ecological plans submitted by funding applicants. To address this gap, governments should establish permanent sustainability units or specialised roles within their cultural (or other) departments. These internal experts can serve as a bridge between high-level climate policies and the music [cultural] sector, ensuring that policy design remains realistic and that information collected from the field is effectively analysed to inform future policy implementation plans.

   Example: The French Ministry of Culture created a small, specialised central team of five to six people dedicated solely to cross-cutting ecological transition across all disciplines.

3. **Integrate the environmental sustainability theme into music [cultural] policy and develop practical measures for implementation**

   Strategic goals and high-level political agendas remain ineffective unless they are translated into operational tools and concrete funding streams. Environmental sustainability needs to be embedded formally into cultural policy core mission statements as well as implementation plans. Complementing aspirational, but abstract rhetoric with clear, predictable rules will allow sector actors to plan with more certainty. Green targets need to be built directly into funding agreements, venue

infrastructure support, and international tour funding, but so that the reporting burden is commensurate with the administrative capacity the funding enables.

Example: The Catalan Institute for Cultural Companies (ICEC) launched the Pla C (Culture for Climate) strategy, structuring public support around specific, music-focused production phases and targeted transition subsidies.

4. **Ensure coherence across multiple levels of government and across different, but connected domains**

As general environmental requirements and regulations increasingly affect the live music infrastructure, horizontal and vertical policy coherence becomes essential. It is frequently the case that ecological strategies or mandates set at the national or federal level are not supported, or are even contradicted, by regional funding rules or municipal environmental regulations. Policymakers must establish systematic cross-governmental alignment and supra-regional cooperation to ensure that from the perspective of a music actor, say a venue, the requirements and funding available on various levels of government make up a coherent whole rather than an incompatible and fragmented set of policies.

5. **Design smart eco-conditionality into music funding**

Any environmental criteria attached to public funding must be custom-made to national or regional specificities, rather than applying generic models (of which there are none as of yet anyway). Policy design needs to take into account geographical realities and context, e.g. variations in national transport infrastructure, as enforcing uniform standards can lead to inequitable outcomes for peripheral or remote regions. Instead of introducing ambitious rules immediately, funding bodies should approach gradually, using flexible or voluntary criteria that incentivise positive adjustments and allow, even support, smaller operators to build capacity before facing strict compliance requirements.

Example: the work carried out by the SMA and Fedelima in France (notably with the support of pilot projects) through Better Live. A manifesto of commitment that enables collaboration with public policy makers on eco-conditionality, particularly through the CNM's tools. Completion of the Better Live MOOC is mandatory for receiving grants.

6. **Provide targeted funding for environmental sustainability projects**

A systematic disconnect occurs when public authorities require cultural operators to meet environmental criteria but restrict subsidies to traditional cultural funding, for example direct programming costs. Governments must provide dedicated funding lines specifically designed to cover the operational and capital costs of the ecological transition of music actors, especially those operating physical infrastructure (e.g. venues). These financial instruments should fund technical upgrades, energy audits, venue insulation, and the transition to low-energy staging equipment, allowing operators to make necessary physical adjustments without competing against their core artistic budgets.

In addition to infrastructure upgrades, dedicated funding should be provided for artistic projects tackling the ecological transition. If the governmental sustainable development or climate policies expect “culture” to lead the transformation through the unique power over people’s imagination, habits and attitudes, then such so-called handprint projects need targeted funding as well.

Examples: The French government operates the Alternatives Vertes programme to support green innovations and the Fonds Vert to fund physical modernisation and energy efficiency upgrades in cultural facilities. Similarly, the Irish government finances interdisciplinary public engagement directly through the multi-annual Creative Climate Action Fund.

7. **Create or authorise tools for environmental sustainability for the sector to use**

   The current marketplace is crowded with an uncoordinated variety of self-styled green calculators and guidelines, which are often intransparent about the underlying calculation models, might use disparate emission factors, and thus create uncertainty around the reliability of carbon accounting. Public authorities should formally authorise and standardise verified digital tools tailored specifically to the operational realities of the music sector; or provide a coherent standard for such tools. Providing financial and institutional backing to such tools helps independent operators to have free access to reliable, transparent benchmarks for tracking audience mobility and carbon footprints without requiring extensive additional resources.

   Example: The French live music sector relies on the Déclic project to establish standardised, sector-specific data-collection methods and baseline metrics. Other examples include Finland's Elma Live and Norway’s Green Producers Tool.

8. **Create practical policy links between music [cultural] policy and sustainable development policy**

   When broader national climate adaptation and sustainable development frameworks are designed, cultural sectors are frequently omitted or introduced only on the most general level. In practice, current national sustainable development strategies and climate adaptation plans often treat culture through superficial rhetoric or narrow physical heritage preservation, leaving music and other cultural actors outside practical mitigation plans and measures. Cultural policymakers need to establish better links with overall climate strategy making. These cross-policy connections must ensure that the cultural sectors are provided with context-sensitive, practical measures rather than just abstract expectations.

9. **Incentivise co-programming through funding for network capacity and slow touring**

   Optimising tour routing and facilitating longer, slower travel models reduces the carbon footprint of artist mobility, but it introduces distinct financial and human costs. Public funding instruments must adapt to absorb these costs by providing financial

support to regional booking networks to ensure administrative capacity, also supporting local operators as well as residency programmes or weekday programming to make slow touring economically viable.

Example: Kulturrom in Norway manages public investment schemes that fund the physical, circular infrastructure of performance spaces and technical asset sharing to support collaborative venue operations.

10. Support structurally smaller grassroots operators, such as venues, festivals

Micro-organisations and independent operators in the live music sector function under acute financial precarity, where daily survival often takes precedence over long-term environmental planning. Imposing strict ecological demands without accompanying technical guidance or infrastructure investment risks turning sustainability into an oppressive administrative burden or a superficial box-ticking exercise. Public policy must provide long-term structural stability and multi-annual operational support, helping small-scale operators pool resources, share materials via regional hubs, and build localised co-programming networks.

Example: The dual system for small venues in France: the Fonpeps program for professionals, which automatically supports the hiring of artists—especially in small venues—and the GIP Café Culture model, which allows grassroots venues to hire artists directly with automatic financial assistance

11. Regulate large commercial entities through strict environmental requirements and taxes

To maintain fairness and balance across the cultural landscape, regulatory interventions must remain strictly scale-dependent. While smaller independent actors require flexibility and supportive incentives, large commercial entities and multinational live entertainment promoters possess the capital, legal teams, and infrastructure to absorb transition costs. Public policy should direct mandatory environmental requirements and targeted regulations at major commercial operations, ensuring that those with the largest carbon footprints and highest market leverage bear the appropriate weight of the transition. Also, given the growing divide between the increasingly profitable major corporations and the deepening precarity of grassroots live music actors, governments should introduce more proactive redistribution mechanisms, such as specific tax on corporate profits of major live music corporations that would be used to support local small operators.

Example: The French National Music Centre (CNM) operates a structural mechanism where a professional tax levied on live music ticket sales as well as streaming platform revenues is redistributed to fund sector-wide project grants and transition aids, providing a precedent for using commercial live revenues to support the sector.