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PEARLE* DECLARATION ON THE FIRST YEAR OF THE CULTURE COMPASS FOR EUROPE AND CALL FOR THE NEXT YEARS

Pearle* – Live Performance Europe, the European federation representing more than 14,000 organisations in the music, performing arts and live events sector through its members, was established in 1991 as a collaborative effort to address issues of common interest. Its members are committed to contributing their collective experience and knowledge to European cultural policymaking and to the vision of the *Culture Compass for Europe: Europe for Culture, Culture for Europe*.

As Pearle* members, we welcome the *Culture Compass for Europe* as a significant step towards a stronger, more coherent, and more ambitious European policy for culture. Ahead of its first anniversary, we reaffirm the value of a common framework that recognises culture's intrinsic value, its contribution to society and its role in Europe's future.

The Compass's four key directions broadly align with the five priorities[1] Pearle* identified in 2024 for the current EU mandate: the innovative power of artistic creation; live performance made by and for humans; greening and sustainability; cultural exchange and mobility; and digital and technological development.

Towards a successful implementation of the Culture Compass

Live performance provides a space for artistic expression and cultural diversity, establishing shared experiences that connect artists and audiences. Its artistic value and contribution to the social and economic life of communities depend on skilled people, viable organisations and appropriate infrastructure.

The conditions that make this possible are shaped by a wider economic and regulatory framework that extends beyond cultural policy. Policies developed without sufficient consideration of the sector's operating realities can create disproportionate administrative and financial burdens, limit organisations' capacity to fulfil their cultural mission and undermine their long-term sustainability.

Pearle* therefore recommends that the European Commission complement the Compass's implementation with a dedicated action plan based on the concrete proposals set out in our 2024–2029 priorities. The plan should address the sector's practical needs and take into account its diverse funding and business models. It should embed the Compass's objectives more firmly in the EU's wider policy and regulatory agenda, including employment, cross-border mobility, taxation, investment and the green and digital transitions.

[1] On the European Stage: 2024-2029 Pearle* Priorities for the Live Performance Sector

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The Commission's Political Guidelines and the European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2024–2029 should guide this work. The action plan should uphold the free movement of workers and the freedom to provide services, while connecting cultural objectives to wider EU frameworks, including the Competitiveness Compass, the 'One Europe, One Market' roadmap and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Practical links should also be established with initiatives on skills and labour mobility, including the Union of Skills and the Fair Labour Mobility Package. These frameworks and initiatives must take into account the sector's characteristics and enable live performance organisations to contribute fully to Europe's shared objectives.

Shared responsibility across the EU institutions and Member States is essential to effective implementation. Cultural policymakers should give due attention to the sector's operational needs, while policymakers in other fields should assess the implications of their proposals on cultural activity.

The sector also needs sustained, accessible and appropriately designed financial support. Live performance is labour-intensive and often entails high fixed costs, long planning cycles and significant financial risk. Tax, investment and funding policies must be better adapted to these realities. In particular, funding arrangements that allow organisations to plan beyond individual projects would strengthen their capacity to develop artistic work and reach audiences.

This stability must be accompanied by a firm commitment to artistic freedom, a cornerstone of democratic societies recognised in the Culture Compass. We call on the EU institutions and Member States to safeguard this freedom across all relevant policies and protect the independence of cultural organisations. Artists and cultural professionals must be able to create and present their work without censorship, intimidation or undue political interference.

Our commitment and call for action

We, the members of Pearle*, stand ready to work with the EU institutions and Member States to develop workable solutions and contribute actively to the preparation of the proposed action plan. Drawing on our sector's shared knowledge, experience and evidence, we ask to be involved in the design, implementation and assessment of measures that affect live performance.

Looking ahead to the Compass's second year, we call for a clear transition from strategic commitment to coordinated implementation. Its success must be measured both by its contribution to stronger European cultural policy and by tangible improvements in the conditions that enable artists, cultural workers and organisations to create, produce and present live performance for audiences and communities across Europe.

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Pearle* full members

Pearle* associate members

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