

Tuesday, 8 September 2026

9:00–9:45	Registration, coffee
9:45–10:25	Welcome Addresses & Introducing the CultureAndHealth Platform Kathrin Kneissel, Austrian Federal Ministry of Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport / Judith delle Grazie, Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.
10:25–10:40	Opening Note: Culture and Health in Vienna – where are we coming from? Dr. Richard Cockett
10:40–11:00	Keynote: Do the arts and culture improve our health? 'Shadows', 'realities' and the latest research evidence. Professor Vicky Karkou, Edge Hill University & <i>Activation</i>
11:00–12:00	Panel discussion: From evidence to policy in culture and health with Monica Urian, DG Education and Culture, European Commission / Nils Fietje, WHO Europe / Oriol Freixa Matalonga, UNESCO / Aleksandra Widhofner, BMWKMS / Herwig Ostermann, GÖG. Moderation: Edith Wolf Perez, ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA
12:00–12:10	<i>Activation</i> with Lukáš Houdek & Ondřej Klíč, RED NOSES International
12:10–13:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:30–14:30	Parallel sessions 1 - Artists' showcasing and workshop teasers <i>Choose only one to attend (1A, 1B, 1C or 1D)</i> Artists' Showcasing – 1A: • Andrew Greenwood (NL) <i>Moving Concerts – from just listening to an active music experience.</i> • Susana Quaresma Vicente (PT) <i>From Isolation to Connection: A Practical Toolkit for Artistic Mediation in Care Homes.</i> • Azahara González de Domingo (BE) <i>Art Palliatif: Creating meaning, connection and dignity through art at the end of life.</i> Artists' Showcasing – 1B: • Ana Atalaia (AT) <i>PAUSE – Artistic Pause format in Healthcare.</i> • Olga Anacka (IE) <i>Sensing, Making, Becoming.</i> • Siiri Ervasti (FI) and Paula Kovanen (FI) <i>Supporting attachment and early interaction between parent and baby through artistic intervention.</i> Workshop – 1C: • Vicky Karkou (UK) <i>Dancing your way out of the blues - A movement exploration of the Arts for the Blues model.</i> Workshop – 1D: • Evelyn Pelayo (ES) <i>Stitch by Stitch – Community & Connection.</i>
14:45–15:45	Parallel sessions 2 - Artists' showcasing and workshop teasers <i>Choose only one to attend (2A, 2B, 2C or 2D)</i> Session – 2A: • Kornelia Kiss (BE) & Edith Wolf Perez (AT) & Guests <i>Advocating for Culture and Health. Part I</i> Artists' Showcasing – 2B: • Catherine Ebser (AT) <i>Ahnroas – The Colours of Life: Visibility, Creativity and Connection Between Generations.</i> • Alina Ritter (AT) <i>YOUareART – Connecting classical portraiture with modern selfie culture to promote youth mental health.</i> • Petra Carina Stadoleanu (RO) <i>Visual archives of collective healing.</i> Workshop – 2C: • Jurij Konjar (SI) <i>Dance against Falls - physical socialisation.</i> Workshop – 2D: • Andrea Geipel (DE) <i>Art, Migraine & Invisible Illness.</i>
15:45–16:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:15–16:20	<i>Activation</i> with Andrew Greenwood, Switch2Move
16:20–17:20	Panel discussion: Imagining the future of Culture and Health with Carmen Valero, RED NOSES International / Clara Bourgeois, Pôle Culture & Santé en Nouvelle Aquitaine / Ivana Slipakoff, Cultura en Vena / Andrew Greenwood, Grijs Gedraaid, Switch2Move / Nicholas Yatromanolakis, Policy Lab. Moderation: Kornelia Kiss, Culture Action Europe Reflection: Herwig Ostermann, GÖG. Kathrin Kneissel, BMWKMS
17:20–17:30	Closing Day 1

Subject to change

Wednesday, 9 September 2026

9:00-9:30	Registration, coffee
9:30-10:00	Opening Day 2 & <i>Activation</i> with Kirin Alejandro España & Jerca Rožnik Novak, ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA
10:00-11:00	Parallel sessions 3 - Artists' showcasing and workshop teasers <i>Choose only one to attend (3A, 3B, 3C or 3D)</i> Session – 3A: Kornelia Kiss (BE) & Edith Wolf Perez (AT) & Guests <i>Advocating for Culture and Health. Part II</i> Artists' Showcasing – 3B: Alec Dominique Fungi Schwenner (DE) <i>Bulaban Circus Lebanon and Berlin: Tools to create a safer space for a young audience to approach very real, very tough topics.</i> Maja Kalafatić (SI) & Nina Pertot Weis (SI) <i>What We Feel Can Move.</i> Jennifer Davison (AT) & Bea Robein (AT) <i>Serenade for the Soul: A workshop series for emotional well-being via music.</i> Workshop – 3C: Alice Presencer (DK) <i>Empowering Collective Performing Arts: A Collection of Voice and Dance Scores to Overcome Social Barriers.</i> Workshop – 3D: Veronika Yadukha (UA) & Olha Stavnykovych (UA) <i>Creating Collage Self-Portraits</i>
11:15-12:15	Parallel sessions 4 - Artists' showcasing and workshop teasers <i>Choose only one to attend (4A, 4B, 4C or 4D)</i> Artists' Showcasing – 4A: Danylo Kelin (IT) <i>Cùratela. A Mobile Museum as a Tool for Autonomous Self-Representation.</i> Anja Papuga (SI) <i>Aging: nature in transition.</i> Kirin Alejandro España (AT), Daniel Eberhöfer (AT), Jerca Rožnik Novak (AT) <i>Move It! Creative empowerment for young people with refugee and migration experiences.</i> Artists' Showcasing – 4B: Emelia Koberg (SE) <i>Embodied Care: Dance and Somatic Practices.</i> Mirela Ivanciu (RO) <i>Memories, Place and Moments of Presence.</i> Anna Prokopczuk-Kwapniewska (PL) <i>Songwriting – Hear Yourself.</i> Workshop – 4C: Ezequiel Guiragossian (AM) <i>Functional Juggling: Making Juggling More Accessible.</i> Workshop – 4D: Daragh Slacke (IE) <i>Befriending The Genius Within: Collaborative Songwriting for Wellbeing and Connection.</i>
12:15-13:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:30-14:00	Presentation, showing and activation with Sanela Halilovic-Uzunic, Elena Gkotsi, Yurriel Columbie Banega & "The KWP Latin Dancers" from Klub der Wiener Pensionist:innen (Viennese Retirees' Club).
14:00-14:20	Keynote: Loneliness and social connection. Insights into the FORESIGHT report on "Einsamkeit in Österreich" (Loneliness in Austria). Flora Gall, Caritas der Erzdiözese Wien
14:20-15:20	Panel discussion: Loneliness and social connection with Dr. Paulina Guachamin, FamiliaMed / Catherine Ebser, artist / Frederik Marroquín, artist / Gerlinde Rohrauer-Näf, Kompetenzzentrum Zukunft Gesundheitsförderung GÖG / Andrea Schmidt, LBG OIS / Flora Gall, Caritas der Erzdiözese Wien Moderation: Lars Ebert, Culture Action Europe
15:20-16:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:00-17:00	Creative finale with artistic connections Lukáš Houdek & Magdalena Klamlinger, RED NOSES International
17:00-17:15	Call to Action! Kornelia Kiss, Culture Action Europe, CultureAndHealth Platform Lars Ebert, Culture Action Europe
17:15-17:30	Closing Artistic performance by Carole Alston

Subject to change

Overview of the parallel sessions on Tuesday 8 September

Tuesday, 8 September 2026 from 13:30 – 14:30			
ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 1A	ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 1B	WORKSHOP 1C	WORKSHOP 1D
Andrew Greenwood (NL) Moving Concerts – where music is no longer something you observe, but something you live together. Susana Quaresma Vicente (PT) From Isolation to Connection: A Practical Toolkit for Artistic Mediation in Care Homes. Azahara González de Domingo (BE) Art Palliatif: Creating meaning, connection and dignity through art at the end of life	Ana Atalaia (AT) PAUSE – Artistic Pause format in Healthcare. Olga Anacka (IE) Sensing, Making, Becoming. Siiri Ervasti (FI) & Paula Kovanen (FI) Supporting attachment and early interaction between parent and baby through artistic intervention.	Vicky Karkou (UK) Dancing your way out of the blues - A movement exploration of the Arts for the Blues model.	Evelyn Pelayo (ES) Stitch by Stitch – Community & Connection.
Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion

Tuesday, 8 September 2026 from 14:45 – 15:45			
SESSION 2A	ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 2B	WORKSHOP 2C	WORKSHOP 2D
Kornelia Kiss (BE) & Edith Wolf Perez (AT) & Guests Advocating for Culture and Health – PART I	Catherine Ebser (AT) Ahnroas – The Colours of Life: Visibility, Creativity and Connection Between Generations. Alina Ritter (AT) YOUareART – Connecting classical portraiture with modern selfie culture to promote youth mental health. Petra Carina Stadoleanu (RO) Visual archives of collective healing.	Jurij Konjar (SI) Dance against Falls - physical socialisation.	Andrea Geipel (DE) Art, Migraine & Invisible Illness.
Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion

Overview of the parallel sessions on Wednesday 9 September

Wednesday, 9 September 2026 from 10:00 – 11:00			
SESSION 3A	ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 3B	WORKSHOP 3C	WORKSHOP 3D
Kornelia Kiss (BE) & Edith Wolf Perez (AT) & Guests Advocating for Culture and Health – PART II	Alec Dominique Fungi Schwenner (DE) Bulaban Circus Lebanon and Berlin: Tools to create a safer space for a young audience to approach very real, very tough topics.	Alice Presencer (DK) Empowering Collective Performing Arts: A Collection of Voice and Dance Scores to Overcome Social Barriers.	Veronika Yadukha (UA) & Olha Stavnykovych (UA) Creating Collage Self-Portraits
	Maja Kalafatić (SI) & Nina Pertot Weis (SI) What We Feel Can Move.		
	Jennifer Davison (AT) & Bea Robein (AT) Serenade for the Soul: A workshop series for emotional well-being via music.		
Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion

Wednesday, 9 September 2026 from 11:15 – 12:15			
ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 4A	ARTISTS' SHOWCASING 4B	WORKSHOP 4C	WORKSHOP 4D
Danylo Kelin (IT) Cùratela. A Mobile Museum as a Tool for Autonomous Self-Representation.	Emelia Koberg (SE) Embodied Care: Dance and Somatic Practices.	Ezequiel Guiragossian (AM) Functional Juggling: Making Juggling More Accessible.	Daragh Slacke (IE) Befriending The Genius Within: Collaborative Songwriting for Wellbeing and Connection.
Anja Papuga (SI) Aging: nature in transition.	Mirela Ivanciu (RO) Memories, Place and Moments of Presence.		
Kirin Alejandro España, Daniel Eberhöfer & Jerca Rožnik Novak (AT) Move It! Creative empowerment for young people with refugee and migration experiences.	Anna Prokopczuk-Kwapniewska (PL) Songwriting – Hear Yourself.		
Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion	Questions & Discussion

The Speakers





Carole Alston

Carole Alston was born in Washington, D.C., and studied acting, dance, and voice at Howard University. She then had a three-year engagement at the Stadttheater Bern, followed by performances at the Theater des Westens in Berlin, and in Karlsruhe and Kaiserslautern. From 1982 to 1985 she was engaged at the Vienna Volksoper.

From 1988 to 2020 she taught jazz dance at the ballet school of the Vienna State Opera. She is one of the most sought-after jazz vocalists in Austria and internationally.



Olga Anacka

Olga Anacka is a multi-award-winning artist whose interdisciplinary practice spans sculpture, textiles, painting, and installation. Drawing on community engagement, she explores the relationship between personal and collective experience, inviting critical reflection on identity, memory, and contemporary social issues while fostering meaningful dialogue.

Born in 1977 in Poland, Anacka graduated from the University of the Arts in Poznań in 2004 with an MA in Art Teaching and Sculpture. She is a member of Visual Artists Ireland and Kildare Arts Collective. Her work has been supported by VISUAL Carlow, Kildare County Council, and the Arts Council of Ireland.



Photo: Foto-Kamaro

Ana Atalaia

Ana Atalaia is an artist working at the intersection of music and Public Health. A classically trained soprano specialising in Early Music, she studied in Portugal, Belgium and Austria and is currently continuing her studies in Historical Performance Practice at the Mozarteum University Salzburg. Alongside her artistic training, she completed degrees in Nursing and Public Health, bringing together artistic practice and scientific perspectives. Her work explores how music can contribute to health promotion beyond traditional concert settings. Rather than separating artistic performance from healthcare, she develops artistic formats that create opportunities for pause, emotional experience and human connection in everyday clinical life. Ana is the creator and artistic director of PAUSE – Artistic Pause Format in Healthcare, a project selected for the 2026 National Call of Arts for Health Austria, investigating how artistic practice can become part of healthcare environments while respecting their routines and responding to the needs of healthcare professionals, patients and relatives.

PAUSE – Artistic Pause Format in Healthcare

PAUSE invites people in healthcare settings to pause and breathe through live singing accompanied by a historical instrument. Around lunchtime, healthcare professionals, patients and relatives are invited to freely enter and leave short performances of Early Baroque music in calm spaces throughout the hospital — even a single song can become a PAUSE.

“I believe that some of the most meaningful encounters between art and health happen in everyday life. I look forward to sharing PAUSE, learning from inspiring practices across Europe, and exchanging ideas with artists and health professionals who are helping shape the future of Arts in Health.”

<https://www.ana-atalaia.com>



Clara Bourgeois

Clara Bourgeois is the Director of the Regional Culture and Health Network (Réseau Culture et Santé) in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, France, a member of the national network Entrelacs. The network is recognized as a resource center by the public partners that carry culture and health policies in the region, bringing together health and medico-social institutions, cultural organizations, and professional artists to develop cooperation projects between them, on an equal footing, within healthcare and care settings. These projects are grounded in respect for the dignity of all, and in the recognition of cultural rights as a fundamental dimension of care environments.

Clara Bourgeois holds a PhD in political science, with a dissertation on the intersectorality of public policies. Throughout her career, she has worked on social economy and social innovation projects and on questions of societal transformation. Today, she advocates for cultural rights as a core dimension of public policy, and supports the development of cultural projects within care settings.

www.linkedin.com/in/clara-bourgeois-b2921387



Richard Cockett

Dr Richard Cockett is a senior editor at The Economist newspaper, an author and an academic. His latest book, *Vienna; How the City of Ideas created the Modern World* was published by Yale University Press in 2023, and in German by Molden Verlag in 2024. It has subsequently been translated into several other languages. He is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and was a visiting fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, in 2026. For The Economist he has been based in Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia. He has also written books about Sudan and Burma, as well as several aspects of British history. He broadcasts frequently on radio and television and lives in London.

Culture and Health in Vienna – where are we coming from?

Dr Richard Cockett will show how Viennese artists and scientists were the first to demonstrate and apply the links between art and architecture on the one hand, and physical and mental well-being on the other. Their pioneering work was institutionalised in the great social democratic experiment of Red Vienna in the 1920s and 30s, and the legacy of that era lives on very palpably in the contemporary Austrian capital, often voted the world's “most liveable city”.



Yuriel Columbie Banega

Yuriel Columbie Banega's professional career began in the fields of Industrial Engineering and Business Management, where he developed strong expertise in strategic planning, project management, quality assurance, and leadership — experience that gave him a structured approach to work and the ability to successfully lead projects while empowering people.

As a Cuban-born professional, he is deeply committed to preserving and sharing the authenticity of Cuban dance and music culture. Since 2019, he has worked as a dance instructor, event organizer, and project manager, combining his organizational skills with his passion for dance, movement, and cultural exchange. To him, dance is far more than an art form — it is a unique combination of physical activity, sport, health, mental well-being, and community. His goal is not only to teach dance techniques but also to inspire joy, confidence, well-being, and a deeper appreciation of Cuban culture.

Since 2021, he has led the “Karibische Luft” project at the Fonds Kuratorium Wiener Pensionisten-Wohnhäuser – Häuser zum Leben. Inspired by the Caribbean spirit, the project promotes physical, mental, and social well-being among older adults through initiatives such as Cuban Afternoons, Latino Parties, Latino Matinees, outdoor dance activities, excursions, and movement programs in community clubs.

His ambition is to develop innovative cultural and movement-based projects that inspire people of all ages, strengthen social connections, and encourage healthier, more active, and fulfilling lives through the transformative power of dance.



Photo: Tony Gigov

Jennifer Davison

Jennifer has performed on stages across Europe and the USA, for over 25 years. Since 2020, she has been active in the emerging field of “Arts for Health”: as co-founder of “Aufatmen für Long Covid” (2021), board member of Arts for Health Austria, touring artist on the 2022/23 “Kunst trifft Gesundheit” tour through Austria's state capitals, and as a speaker and moderator. She is co-founder of the start-up ArtWave, including the development of the ArtWave app and a first research project with the University of Vienna. Since 2024, she has been an Executive Coach in Performance and Potential, EU-accredited through Guildhall Ignite, London. Through the EU-funded CARE grant, together with Bea Robein as the “ArtWave Divas,” she brought their workshop “Serenade for the Soul” into a wide range of environments – from McKinsey, ASFINAG, Juridicum Vienna, the Vienna University of Economics and Business, to Forum Alpbach and the Carinthischer Sommer.

Serenade for the Soul

Serenade for the Soul explores the transformative power of voice, breath, and music as accessible tools for emotional well-being. Developed by opera singers Jennifer Davison and Bea Robein, the format translates decades of stage experience into simple, practical techniques grounded in current research on arts and health. No musical background is required. Through guided breathing exercises, vocal and resonance work, and music-based creative methods, participants experience stress reduction, learn science-based tools to build resilience, and connect in meaningful ways with others in the room. Serenade for the Soul is part of the EU-funded CARE project, exploring health and well-being in the workplace through arts-based interventions. The format has also been delivered across healthcare and cultural settings, including hospital staff well-being initiatives.

“We love sharing what we've learned on opera stages – helping people to experience their voices as an inbuilt wellness-technology – and being a part of establishing arts & culture practices as the 5th pillar of human health and flourishing.”



Photo: Jennifer Vigl

Daniel Eberhöfer

Daniel Eberhöfer has been an active dancer for over 15 years. Growing up within the dance community naturally led him to document movement and urban art through photography and videography. His firsthand experience as a dancer shapes his perspective behind the lens, giving him an intuitive understanding of rhythm, timing, precise moments, and emotional dynamics.

In addition to documenting dance events and collaborating on theater projects, Daniel is involved in cultural community work and supports local initiatives. He continues to be a regular presence at events, using his work to bridge visual documentation with ongoing support for the community.



Lars Ebert

Lars Ebert is Secretary General of Culture Action Europe, the main advocacy organisation for the cultural sector in Europe. Previously, he was co-director of H401 in Amsterdam and deputy director of the European League of Institutes of the Arts.

“For the first time, three EU institutions have put it in writing: culture is good for Europe's health — and Europe's health needs culture. Culture Action Europe has driven this case for years. This Forum is where that political commitment becomes practice.”



Catherine Ebser

Catherine Ebser is a photographer and graphic designer from Austria, raised in Bad Ischl. After training at the Werbeakademie Wien, she worked in advertising agencies in graphic design, photo production, and beauty retouching — an experience that sharpened her critical eye on prevailing beauty ideals. A photography qualification followed.

Since 2015, she has dedicated herself to countless projects and images creating unconventional portraits of older people. With her series “Altmodisch” (“Old-fashioned”), she deliberately breaks with clichés about aging, portraying her subjects as confident, humorous, and creative rather than through the usual outdated lens.

As part of the European Capital of Culture 2024, she started the project “Ahnloas” (Upper Austrian dialect for “grandmother's journey”); portraits were created throughout the Salzkammergut region as well as Austria nationwide, 27 of which were shown in a best-of exhibition. In its 2026 evolution, Ahnloas brought young people into the project: across generations, exploring how beauty ideals differ between young and old, a hopeful step toward bridging generations through age and body positivity. The project responds to a time when demographic change is rapidly aging our society, social media floods young people with unrealistic role models, and a noticeable care crisis is putting pressure on the system.

Catherine lives and works in Vienna.

“I'm looking forward to the Culture & Health Forum, because my work is exactly at this intersection: art created across generations that improves health and wellbeing for everyone. With 'Altmodisch' and especially my 'Ahnloas,' I want to show that age can hold dignity, humor, and style — and that older people shouldn't be seen mainly as 'patients.'”

<https://www.altmodisch.at>



Photo: Annaleena Telasmaa

Siiri Ervasti

Siiri Ervasti is a Helsinki-based drama instructor (BA), originally from Oulu, Finland. She works as a freelance artist in the fields of theater education, community-engaged art, theater directing and playwriting. At the heart of her practice are the applied and group-based methods of theatre, where scripts are created as a result of play and experimentation. Her strengths as an artist are imagination and playfulness, the ability to create a safe and comfortable working atmosphere, and the ability to create multi-layered narratives for both stage works and workshop implementations. She combines fairytale-like worlds with social justice and feminist themes. Her latest theater work, *The Greenhouse That Collapsed*, dealt with the challenges of the care sector from the caregivers' point of view; it was performed at the Turku City Theater in spring 2025.

She works together with Paula Kovanen on the Nupulla project, which consists of participatory art workshops and a theater performance for babies. The name of the Nupulla project (Just about to bloom) describes the early stages of both life and parenthood, when one is on the verge of something new and beautiful. The idea for the project came during their baby year, when they were introduced to art activities aimed at babies.

"I'm super excited to meet all the other artists and share our project!"

<https://nupulla.webnode.fi/>



Photo: Evita / The Goat Multimedia

Kirin Alejandro España

Kirin Alejandro España is a Vienna-based dancer, choreographer, performer and socially engaged artist with Guatemalan roots. His artistic practice moves between contemporary and urban dance, physical theatre, choreography and participatory performance. For more than a decade, he has worked professionally as a performer and dance artist as well as with children and young people in educational, inclusive and socially engaged contexts. His collaborations include SILK Fluegge, Ich bin O.K., Dschungel Wien, Arts for Health Austria and various interdisciplinary productions and festivals.

A central focus of his work is creating spaces in which people can encounter one another through movement beyond linguistic, cultural or social boundaries. He is particularly interested in how dance can strengthen self-expression, confidence, connection and a sense of belonging. In participatory projects, Kirin combines improvisation, urban dance practices, physical theatre and playful choreographic methods. Rather than imposing a fixed movement language, he works with what participants bring into the room – their movements, experiences, ideas and individual ways of expressing themselves – and develops these impulses into shared artistic processes and performances.

MOVE IT! 2.0 – It's Time to Give!

MOVE IT! 2.0 is a participatory dance and performance project developed with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including students who had recently arrived in Austria and were learning German in a school support programme. Over several weeks, dance, movement, music, rhythm, voice and play became tools for exploring connection, trust, self-expression and belonging beyond spoken language. At the centre of the process was a simple question: What can I give? Not materially, but as a person – energy, movement, an idea, care, trust, time or support. Rather than following a predetermined choreography, the final performance, It's Time to Give!, grew from participants' own individual contributions and encounters through improvisation and choreographic tasks.

"I'm looking forward to exchanging ideas with people who also believe in the power of art to create connection, participation and spaces where people can discover what they have to give."



Photo: Sasha Chupryna

Nils Fietje

Nils Fietje is a Technical Officer on Culture and Health within the Behavioural and Cultural Insights (BCI) Unit at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and Co-founder/Co-director of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab. Trained in English literature and the cultural history of medicine, he has spent his career examining how cultural contexts shape health and well-being. In 2019 he commissioned WHO's first-ever evidence review on arts and health, now a cornerstone publication in the field. In 2023, Nils co-founded the Jameel Arts & Health Lab, a globally leading arts and health think-tank focusing on arts and health research, policy development, engagement, and capacity building. More recently, he was one of the principal authors of the three-paper Lancet collection on arts and health, to be published in September 2026.



Oriol Freixa Matalonga

Liaison Officer for Culture at the UNESCO Liaison Office in Brussels and Representation to the EU, Oriol Freixa Matalonga is an expert in international cultural relations and cultural development cooperation with more than 20 years of experience in cultural policies and the management of development cooperation programmes in international organizations of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UNESCO). He currently coordinates from Brussels the UNESCO – EU partnership on Culture, which dates to 2012. Between 2008 and 2014, he was a programme specialist at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, in the Division of Cooperation with Funding Sources in the Bureau of Strategic Planning, as national expert seconded from the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), responsible for several cooperation trust funds with EU Member States in the fields of culture, education, sciences and communication. In UNESCO's Culture Sector, he has been involved in several projects linked to UNESCO's conventions, including the World Heritage Convention, the Intangible Heritage Convention, and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Oriol has also prepared, managed and coordinated policies and programmes on culture within the European Development Fund for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States. From 1998 to 2004, he was head of technical assistance at DG VIII of the European Commission for Development (now DG INTPA), in charge of several European cultural cooperation initiatives, and represented the European Commission at festivals including Cannes and FESPACO. He has been active in the academic field, taking part in postgraduate diplomas in international cultural cooperation at several European universities.



Flora Gall

Flora Gall is an expert in loneliness mitigation and a passionate driver of social innovation. Since 2022, she has served as Head of Plaudernetz at Caritas der Erzdiözese Wien. Plaudernetz is a hotline against loneliness that has facilitated over 80,000 conversations to provide human connection and psychosocial prevention. Under her strategic leadership, the project has expanded into digital tools and recently scaled its impactful model internationally into Germany.

Flora brings an extensive background in strategy, business transformation, and systemic organizational development to the social sector. Prior to her work at Caritas, she held executive and managerial roles in tech and consulting, including serving as a Management Board Member at Shpock and working as a Manager at the consulting firm Kearney across Europe, Asia, and Australia. An alumna of the Vienna University of Economics and Business and Babson College (USA), where she specialized in Social Entrepreneurship, Flora combines an analytical framework with systemic coaching expertise. As an academic lecturer and strategic leader, she is dedicated to leveraging social innovation and community-driven initiatives to dismantle the societal taboo of loneliness and strengthen collective health.

Loneliness and social connection: insights into the FORESIGHT report on “Einsamkeit in Österreich” (Loneliness in Austria)

Connecting art's impact on health with Austria's social reality, this keynote presents the FORESIGHT report's findings on the “silent pandemic” of loneliness. The session examines critical data and offers inspiration for concrete steps on how to strengthen social cohesion and connection.

“Studies prove that loneliness is a serious threat to public health in Austria. This event is so important because it shows that art and culture are so much more than entertainment. They are essential tools to strengthen solidarity, improve collective well-being, and have the power to bring people back into active community life.”



Photo: Vanessa Sogorb

Katy Geertsen

Katy Geertsen is a professional dance artist and teacher who specialises in Dance for Health. After graduating with a BA (Hons) in Dance Theatre from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London in 2011, she continued her training with the LINK Dance Company at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Perth, Australia. She subsequently worked as a rehearsal director for a dance company for older dancers, as well as a professional support dance artist for a dance company for people with various disabilities. In 2015, she completed the Dance for PD® Teacher Training programme with the Mark Morris Dance Group, launching Dance for Parkinson's classes in Western Australia. Upon returning to Europe, she co-founded ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA (AfHA) and obtained her Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning from Trinity College London in 2022. She now works as a Dance for Health teaching artist and advocate, continues to teach dance to people of all ages and plays a key role in the workshops and research department at the ImPulsTanz festival. She is also the backbone of ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA.

"This Forum embodies a vision we had when establishing ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA in 2020: to bring together artists, health professionals, policymakers, ministries and cultural organisations to recognise that culture is not an 'extra' to health, but an integral part of creating healthier, more connected societies. It is a celebration of how far the field has come, but, more importantly, a call to turn this recognition into lasting change."

www.artsforhealthaustria.eu



Andrea Geipel

Dr. Andrea Geipel is a German artist, researcher and science communicator whose work explores the intersections of art, health and science. Drawing on conceptual art, participatory artistic research and perspectives from Disability Art, she develops artistic formats that investigate how invisible illnesses can be communicated through visual and participatory practices. While her own experience with chronic migraine informs many of her projects, her work addresses broader questions of health communication, stigma and the cultural understanding of illness.

Her artistic practice spans drawing, stone sculpture, object-based work, mixed media, participatory installations and digital formats. Projects such as BROKEN ECHOS and KOPFLANDSCHAFTEN combine artistic research with public participation to create new spaces for dialogue between patients, healthcare professionals and society.

Andrea Geipel studied Sports Science with a focus on neuropsychology and holds a PhD in Science and Technology Studies from the Technical University of Munich. Her professional background bridges science communication, digital engagement and museum practice, including positions at the Deutsches Museum Munich and the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel. Her current work investigates the role of participatory artistic practice in health communication and the destigmatization of invisible illness.

“I am excited to connect with an international community working at the intersection of art and health and to learn from different perspectives on creative approaches to care and communication.”

www.andreageipel.net



Elena Gkotsi

Elena Gkotsi was born in Athens, Greece, and moved to Vienna in 2009 to study Political Science.

After completing her studies, she knew that she wanted her work to have a positive impact on people's lives. In 2019, she joined the Pensionist*innenklubs der Stadt Wien. Today, she is responsible for the Klubs in two districts, leading a diverse team of people from different backgrounds and age groups. She enjoys developing the Klubs' portfolio through creativity and innovation, discovering the potential of both her team and its members, and encouraging them to explore new opportunities and experiences.

She is grateful for the opportunity to work on a variety of innovative projects that help strengthen the Klub community, and is proud to contribute to creating opportunities for senior citizens in Vienna to enjoy their daily lives, connect with one another, and turn their dreams into reality.



Azahara Gonzalez de Domingo

Azahara is an art therapist and socially engaged artist, born in Madrid and based in Brussels, working at the intersection of culture, health and social care. With a background in Art History, a Master's in Cultural Heritage Management and specialised in art therapy, she connects artistic practice, cultural work and care, with a strong focus on social inclusion and community engagement.

Her professional trajectory spans diverse intercultural contexts across Europe and North Africa, including work with UNESCO in Rabat and with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation in Algeria and Sahrawi refugee camps. In Brussels, she worked for several years on literacy programmes for adults in vulnerable situations.

She currently develops Art Palliatif, a project centred on creative accompaniment in palliative care, working closely with healthcare teams. The project explores how artistic and cultural practices can accompany processes of serious illness and end of life, fostering expression, memory and dignity for patients, families and caregivers. Art Palliatif was recently selected as one of the eight winners of the Culture and Health Platform Grant.

Her practice is grounded in person-centred, ethical and participatory approaches that recognise culture as a key resource for wellbeing, connection and care... until the end of life.

<https://www.artpalliatif.be/>



Judith delle Grazie

Judith delle Grazie is the Director of the Department of Health Promotion and Prevention at the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection (BMASGPK). In this role, she is responsible for key national strategies, processes, and measures in the field of health promotion and primary prevention. In particular, she oversees the “Health Promotion Agenda,” an instrument of the BMASGPK that aims to strengthen and further develop health promotion in Austria and to implement the Austrian Health Promotion Strategy. In addition, she is responsible for the “Austrian Health Goals” initiative and heads the Coordination Office for the Prevention Funds of the Austrian Federal Office of Health.



Andrew Greenwood

Andrew Greenwood, founder of Switch2Move, developer of the Dansant postgraduate education programmes, and founder of the Aumentic Movement Foundation, pioneers the use of movement and dance as tools for health and inclusion. His work empowers people living with neurological and physical challenges through creativity, guided movement and live music.

His collaborations with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Kamerata Zuid and the Gran Canaria Symphony Orchestra have been instrumental in shaping Moving Concerts, introducing older adults and differently abled people to the joy of participatory art. Greenwood's human-centred approach continues to inspire orchestras to embrace diversity, connection and active participation through music.

Bringing together his experience in choreography, healthcare, inclusive art and behavioural change, he now describes his evolving artistic practice through the working title Behavioural Choreographer.

Moving Concerts

Moving Concerts reimagines the classical concert as a shared, participatory experience where music and movement bring people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds together. By transforming audiences from passive listeners into active participants, it creates new possibilities for connection, well-being, empathy and social cohesion.



Martina Griewank

A movement artist, somatic educator, and creative mediator with over two decades of experience dedicated to creative health and social inclusion. Her practice blends contemporary dance, Pilates, and somatic education to establish safe spaces for creative expression, focusing on active aging and supporting institutionalized elderly populations. She has collaborated extensively with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on sensory and physical mediation initiatives. Currently, she co-develops and facilitates community-engaged sessions within the framework of the European project Alcabrichel: Living Memories of the River.

From Isolation to Connection: A Practical Toolkit for Artistic Mediation in Care Homes

Drawing from a decade of community-based practice in music and movement, this presentation delivers a practical toolkit designed to transition institutionalized seniors from passive isolation to active creative expression. Grounded in verbal and non-verbal communication, music and sensory exploration, the session demonstrates how carefully curated artistic triggers – such as rhythm, somatics, tactile objects, and oral histories – can validate identity and restore agency in care home settings, through what the presenters call the Biographical Resonance Method. Presented together with Susana Quaresma.

“I am incredibly thrilled to join this event because it stands at the exact intersection of what drives my artistic practice: the vital cross-pollination between culture, community heritage, and creative health.”



Photo: AnotherePerspektivePhotography

Paulina Guachamín

Dr. Paulina Guachamín is a general practitioner in Vienna and founder of FamiliaMed. In her medical work, she combines professional medical expertise with a personal, accessible, and culturally sensitive approach to healthcare. A particular focus of her work is on prevention, long-term care, and clear communication with her patients.

As a physician with an international background, she is also familiar with the challenges that language, migration, and cultural differences can present within the healthcare system. At her practice, FamiliaMed, she offers medical care in German and Spanish, aiming to create a space where people feel understood, respected, and well supported regardless of their background.

For Dr. Guachamín, general medicine means not only treating illness but also listening, building trust, and accompanying people over the long term through different stages of life. She understands health as an interplay of physical, psychological, and social factors.

“Health is not created in the treatment room alone. Loneliness, migration, language, and the sense of belonging significantly affect our well-being. Art and culture can connect people, create encounters, and build bridges where words are sometimes not enough. That is why I consider the exchange between health, art, and culture especially valuable.”

www.familiamed.at



Ezequiel Guiragossian

Ezequiel Guiragossian is a circus artist and educator. Originally from Argentina and currently based in Armenia, his work goes beyond the stage, building bridges between creativity, inclusion, and community. He is the founder of Circo Fractal, a platform promoting circus arts in Latin America and Europe.

Over the past years, he has traveled to many countries leading projects that combine circus arts, movement, and theatre with educational and therapeutic approaches. In Armenia, he is establishing the country's first Social Circus initiative (South Caucasus Social Circus), working with children, youth, and people with disabilities through workshops, performances, and community-based activities. His practice is rooted in the belief that circus is more than entertainment – it is a language that fosters trust, resilience, and collective experience. He aims to decentralize access to the arts, empower local practitioners, and create sustainable structures that can grow beyond individual roles.

“This forum represents a beautiful chance for me to explain the concepts behind Functional Juggling technique to other artists and health professionals, who are also working with arts to improve well-being in our societies. During my workshop, I'll be glad to show games and exercises and explain the benefits of this creative methodology, which promotes inclusion, confidence, and joy to participants and facilitators.”

<https://southcaucasus-socialcircus.com/>



Photo: Eeva Suorlahti

Clare Guss-West

Clare Guss-West is a former professional dancer, international choreographer, opera director, holistic health practitioner and author specialising in the integration of health, wellbeing and performance science within dance. Her work translates research on attentional focus, motor learning and performance enhancement into practical applications for dance training, performance, healthy ageing and healthcare contexts, providing dancers, teachers, facilitators, coaches and musicians with evidence-informed strategies to optimise movement efficiency and physical and mental wellbeing.

Clare has delivered training internationally for organisations including The Royal Ballet, Houston Ballet, Finnish National Ballet, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Stockholm University of the Arts and the Royal Academy of Dance. She is the founder and lead of innovative Dance for Health initiatives including #Seniorstars (Bern Ballet and the University of Bern) and Connect, for individuals living with neurological challenges, with Zurich Ballet, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and Kunsthhaus Zürich. She lectures on Dance for Health at the University of Bern and Université Côte d'Azur, France.

Clare is Co-Chair of the IADMS Professional Development & Recognition Committee and Founder and Director of the Dance & Creative Wellness Foundation.

The Art of Attention: Simple Tools to Facilitate Learning, Participation and Belonging

How we direct attention influences not only how we move and learn, but how we connect and experience wellbeing. Drawing on motor learning and performance science, this practical workshop explores how attentional focus tools can foster engagement and inclusion across Arts in Health settings. Through practical activities, participants explore how to adapt cueing language and imagery to support engagement across ages, abilities and health conditions.



Sanela Halilovic-Uzunic

Sanela Halilovic-Uzunic is responsible for the Klubs in Vienna's 23rd district.

Alongside her law studies, she started working at the Klubs, where she has now been working for the past 10 years.

As a mother of two young boys, it is important to her to be able to express herself creatively in her profession and to go to work with a sense of joy and fulfillment.

She leads a team of 18 people from many different countries, with a wide range of talents and strengths, and finds it wonderful to see how they complement one another and work together to create the best possible experience for the Klubs' senior members.

She particularly values the aspect of participation: the senior members actively shape the daily life of the Klubs themselves and have a significant influence on it. The goal is to enable them to participate in community life for as long as possible, while always keeping their wishes and needs at the heart of what is done.



Natalia Hecht

Natalia Hecht is a psychologist, community artist, and expert in social innovation from Argentina. She lives in Vienna and has many years of experience in developing artistic, curatorial, and evaluation processes in the arts and culture sector, as well as arts and health sector more specifically, using diversity-critical, participatory, postcolonial, feminist, and transcultural approaches. Her professional practice centres on participatory co-creation and (un)learning processes with diverse communities and cultural organisations, including Brunnenpassage, RED NOSES International, D/Arts, Schwarze Frauen Community, the Latinx migrant community, and Kultursommer Wien, among others. She also works accompanying artists in their professional practice to reflect on their processes when working with different social groups and aesthetic questions. She is currently Programme Director at ignato, a social innovation agency working to identify, adapt, and scale social innovations across Europe.

Participatory and Co-Creative Needs Assessment

In the field of Arts for Health, interventions take place within complex human and social contexts, and needs assessment processes help practitioners get to know the people they work with and understand what is important to them. Co-creative needs assessment offers a way to engage with these questions, creating an artistic journey that is meaningful and connected to participants' lived experiences, while critically questioning assumptions and creating shared space to discover what matters and what might emerge.

Through reflection, inspiration and prototyping, artists will explore how to learn about participants' needs and aspirations together with them, placing participants at the centre of the process in ways that foster agency, empowerment and positively influence health and wellbeing.



Lukáš Houdek

Born and based in Prague, Lukáš Houdek studied documentary filmmaking before joining Zdravotní klaun (Czech member of Red Noses International, a healthcare clown organisation) in 2001. He subsequently worked there as a clown, coach, and lecturer for over two decades. He has taught clowning both nationally and internationally, and worked as a long-term pedagogue at Cirqueon – Centre for New Circus in Prague, and the Nonverbal Theatre Department of the Prague HAMU academy. His current work focuses primarily on training medical staff and students in humour as a communication tool, alongside ongoing engagement in clown research and development on many levels. Lukáš was also an active stage clown for many years as a member of the Squadra Sua clown troupe.



Mirela Ivanciu

Mirela Ivanciu graduated from the Art Academy, Bucharest, Sculpture Department (1996) and an MA in British Cultural Studies at the University of Bucharest (1997). She continued her studies on Theory at the Jan van Eyck Academy, in Maastricht. After graduating (2000), receiving the Laureate diploma, she continued her studies in the Visual Arts Department of State University of New York, at Buffalo, graduating with an MFA with specialization in Photography. In 2017, she graduated with a PhD from the National University of Arts, in Bucharest.

Mirela Ivanciu exhibited at Art Encounters – Timișoara, the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Bucharest, CIAC at Pont Aven, France, Else Gallery at Sacramento, California, Selby Gallery at Ringling School of Art and Design, Sarasota, Florida; Bradford Gallery, Bradford, UK, Imagine Gallery, Beijing; Yan Club, Beijing; Upton Gallery, Buffalo; City Hall, Buffalo, New York State; Jan van Eyck Academy, The Netherlands; Ceramic Avenue, HEDAH Gallery, Maastricht.

Mirela Ivanciu is interested in the visual experiment as well as in the particularities of women's experience. Her projects are mainly concerned with the relationship between change and stillness, as well as with interdependent relationships.

“I am looking forward to meeting other practitioners in Vienna, to listen and have dialogues with them, to better understand the larger context of the culture and health projects and practices, as well as to improve my practice, too.”

www.mirelaivanciu.space



Maja Kalafatić

Maja Kalafatić, self-employed in culture, is a dance-maker, choreographer, pedagogue, and yoga teacher from Slovenia. Her work primarily focuses on dance-making, but also explores various directions and perspectives, including social choreography and activism. She maintains a close connection to the visual arts and enjoys integrating theory with practice in contemporary dance. Her approach is interdisciplinary, emphasising new formats of collaboration and dance performance. She cherishes working through friendships, nonhierarchically, and internationally. A key aspect of her work involves extending dance beyond traditional dance-theatre contexts and engaging local communities in artistic processes. She is a member of the Bunch of Scrumps collective (alongside Jacqueline Aylward and Jesse Ojajärvi), which produces experimental dance and music performances. Maja holds two master's degrees: a Master of Dance Performance from the Theatre Academy Uniarts, Helsinki, Finland, and a Master of Arts in Dance Dissemination from the University of Music and Dance Cologne, Germany, as well as a Bachelor of Dance from the Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance, Austria.

What We Feel Can Move – A Dialogue Between Artistic Movement and Somatic Practice with Women Serving Sentences at Ig Prison

What We Feel Can Move is a participatory artistic practice that integrates somatic methodologies with movement-based creative processes, offering a space in which the body becomes a source of perception, expression, reflection, and connection. Through guided movement explorations, participants are invited to deepen bodily awareness, strengthen psychophysical well-being, and engage with imagination and creativity as tools for personal and collective inquiry. The workshop was developed and facilitated by the project's authors, Maja Kalafatić and Nina Pertot Weis, in collaboration with the Ig Prison Institution and the women serving their sentences there. The project presentation will offer an in-depth overview of the project's conceptual framework, methodology, and practical implementation, incorporating visual documentation, reflective discussion and live demonstrations of selected exercises.

<https://koreografski.info/maja-kalafatic/>



Vicky Karkou

Vicky is the Director of the Research Centre for Arts and Wellbeing at Edge Hill University, UK, and an internationally known academic and researcher in the arts and arts psychotherapies with external funding successes of over £10 million. She has had funding successes from major research councils in the UK and from European university funding. She is an affiliate researcher for the Jameel Arts and Health Lab, a founding member of the International Creative Arts Therapies Research Alliance, working on commissioned projects from the WHO Arts and Health Office.

She is widely published in peer reviewed journals, has authored, edited and co-edited books, and has written numerous book chapters. She travels extensively for research and teaching purposes offering keynotes, experiential workshops and consultancy work around the world.

Do the Arts Improve Our Health? Myths, Truths and Everything in Between Based on the Latest Evidence in the Field

The discussion on whether the arts can support people's health is intensified with new evidence offering strong support but also generating criticism and scepticism. In this talk, Vicky will explore some of the latest evidence on what works for whom, identifying where the evidence remains weak and needs further research, and where it is undisputable and calls for policy changes.

"We are currently riding one of the most exciting waves of change in public health around the world that acknowledges that the arts have an important role to play in improving people's lives. Sharing experiences with others in Europe and beyond will only help us to ride this wave skillfully and with pleasure, accompanied by kindred spirits."



Danylo Kelin

Danylo Kelin, member of the TIST collective which was founded in 2020 in Bologna by Michele Liparesi and Yulia S. Tikhomirova to address the consequences of pandemic management and rethink the social role of art outside neoliberal logics of profit. Since 2020, the collective has seen the participation of various visual artists who have passed through its path, bringing skills and developing creative directions based on the principles of non-competition, solidarity, and care.



Kornelia Kiss

Kornelia Kiss is Head of Culture and Health at Culture Action Europe (CAE), the major European cross-cultural network and umbrella organisation representing the cultural sector towards the European Institutions. She is co-author of the 'CultureForHealth Report' which is referenced in key EU documents on the comprehensive approach to mental health (see the European Commission communication, and the EU Council Conclusion). She was an external advisor to the EU's Culture and Health: Time to Act report. She leads the EU co-funded, four-year-long Culture And Health platform uniting 17 organisations from 15 EU countries with the aim to support artists working at the intersection of the cultural, health, care and social sectors. Her key interest lies in how to change policies in a way that creates an enabling environment for initiatives in culture, health and wellbeing.



Magdalena Klamming

Magdalena Klamming serves as Head of the International Artistic Department at RED NOSES International, where she focuses on artistic quality and artists' development, also contributing to shaping the organisation's artistic identity and strengthening sustainable artistic management practices. She works to nurture creativity and safeguard artistic excellence across the organisation. Additionally, she is a proud member of the RED NOSES International Safeguarding Team, helping to ensure safe, respectful, and empowering environments for artists and their audiences.

Magdalena is an experienced cultural manager, trained musicologist, and singer, with a deep and abiding passion for the arts and the people behind them. Her career spans classical music festivals, opera houses, concert halls, and international cultural cooperation projects, always guided by a belief in the transformative power of artistic work. She has dedicated much of this journey to supporting and empowering young artists, helping them unlock their full potential while creating innovative formats that engage and inspire diverse audiences.

"I strongly believe in the power of the arts, a power healthcare clowning has built on, working at the centre of culture and health practices for more than 30 years. I'm curious to connect with the artists showcased and the practitioners bringing their own perspectives — and to see what new ideas emerge from that exchange."



Kathrin Kneissel

Kathrin Kneissel is Head of the “Funding and International Affairs” group within the Arts and Culture Section of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport (BMWKMS), and has also headed the Department for European and International Cultural Policy since 1999. The department's key areas of focus are the greening of the cultural sector, gender equality, fairness, and art and health. She currently serves as the ministry's representative on various bodies, for example on the board of the Impulstanz Foundation, the Friedrich Kiesler Foundation and the Artists' Social Insurance Fund.



Emelia Koberg

Emelia Muriel Koberg is a Swedish-Canadian dance and performance artist, choreographer, somatic educator, and yoga teacher based in Uppsala, Sweden. Her practice bridges contemporary dance, contact improvisation, somatics, embodiment, and participatory arts to explore relationships, care, and social inclusion. She holds a BA in International Development and Globalization from the University of Ottawa and an education in Dance and Somatics at ISLO in Finland, Stockholm University of the Arts, and Wik Folkhögskola. Emelia is the co-founder of Effrontery Movement Danskollektiv, an interdisciplinary collective with visual and dance artist Emilie Keijser and performance artist Lihong Chew, developing participatory performances and artistic research at the intersection of dance, embodiment, ecology, and social justice. Over the past decade, Emelia has taught and facilitated movement practices with children, youth, and adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, grounded in trauma-informed, queer-feminist approaches that value accessibility, consent, and embodied knowledge.

Beyond Words: Dance, Somatics and Relational Health in LSS Care

This presentation explores how dance, somatic practices, and non-verbal communication can foster participation, creativity, and relational wellbeing for adults with intellectual disabilities and autism within Swedish LSS services. Drawing from her ongoing Culture & Health project with Humana LSS in Uppsala, Emelia shares an emerging methodology combining contemporary dance, trauma-informed yoga, and consent-based practices that strengthen bodily autonomy and social connection.

“The arts offer us ways of being and relating with curiosity, care, and honesty, essential qualities as we navigate the complex and interconnected challenges facing our world today. I’m excited to be part of this moment of exchange in Vienna and to learn from artists, researchers, and practitioners who are collectively reimagining the relationship between culture, health, and care.”



Jurij Konjar

Jurij Konjar is a Slovenian dancer, improviser, choreographer and teacher. He studied dance at PARTS in Brussels and later with Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson, amongst others.

His teaching includes elements of improvisation and writing practices, the Tuning Scores of Lisa Nelson, Material for the Spine of Steve Paxton and contact improvisation.

He performs improvised performances and his own choreographed work internationally. His performances include Catharsis for Beginners, Ulysses, Still, For Juliano Mer-Khamis, Monday at Eight (co-directed), Biodegradables, To Crack a Tear (co-directed), A Report from Contactfestival Freiburg 2023 and Despite.

As an artist he's worked with Bal Moderne Brussels for Cultural Capital of Europe 2000, with Danceability communities in Finland and Austria, has taken part in the I Like to Move It Move school project for Linz Cultural Capital of Europe 2009, and with the Yellow Mellow Erasmus+ financed project in schools 2019–2022. Jurij is a part of the worldwide contact improvisation community and is a creator of the shared, nomadic working space called Habitat.

"I'm curious if in this conference we can have a realistic exchange about how movement-with-awareness, collaboration-through-touch, and sensing can contribute to changing the current course of mankind. How can we present our answers to the current social challenges, in an accessible, attractive and understandable way? What are the challenges of artists working in other disciplines?"



Photo: Juho Vehniäinen

Paula Kovanen

“Everyone is born into this world with equal worth” – this idea is one of the cornerstones of community artist Paula Kovanen in both life and art: we should treat each other equally and include everyone in making and experiencing art. Born in the Finnish capital region in 1987, Kovanen is a Bachelor of Cultural Production and Bachelor of Culture and Arts by education. During her school days in the early 2010s, she became interested in the different opportunities offered by art and gravitated towards applied and community art. Since graduating, Kovanen has worked on various applied art projects: among other things, she has composed songs with young people with intellectual disabilities, prepared audio works for the elderly, performed for the hearing-impaired elderly and prepared performances for drug addicts. In addition to applied arts, Kovanen has acted in professional theatres and on TV. Her latest work is the Nupulla project, which aims to support the interaction between baby and parent through art.

The greatest achievement in Kovanen's life is her 2-year-old child. She hopes that her little one will grow up in a world where all children are born equal.

“What I'm most looking forward to at the Vienna event is meeting new people and their amazing projects, and I hope to make new colleagues with whom I can be inspired by art together :)”

<https://paulakovanen.webnode.fi/> | <https://nupulla.webnode.fi/>



Photo: Eva Kelety

Frederik Marroquín

Frederik Marroquín is a Guatemalan-German visual artist and choreographer who examines space as a social and architectural construct. His work combines large-scale, site-specific installations, performance, and audience participation, often using reclaimed industrial materials and found objects that invite interaction. He is co-founder of the Semmelweisklinik art and culture center, one of Austria's largest self-managed cultural spaces. He holds a diploma in Performative Art, Sculpture, and Spatial Strategies from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and has been honored with, among others, the Queer Art Prize of Vienna Contemporary.

Recent projects were shown at venues such as Kunsthalle Wien and the Haus der Geschichte Wien (House of History, Vienna) and at Semmelweisklinik. He has also given talks at, among others, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Vienna, TU Wien, Funkhaus Wien, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, and at the symposium Building Communities held by Kreative Räume Wien.



Photo: Ettl

Herwig Ostermann

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Herwig Ostermann has been Managing Director of Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG) since 2016, having led the Department of Health Economics from September 2013. He holds a part-time professorship in Health Policy and Administration at the Department of Public Health and Health Technology Assessment at UMIT.

Herwig studied International Economics in Innsbruck and Dublin, and subsequently completed his master's and doctoral studies in Health Sciences at the private University for Health Sciences, Medical Informatics and Technology (UMIT) in Hall in Tirol.

Herwig publishes regularly in academic journals and serves as an advisor to the Federal Ministry of Health as well as on various EU and WHO committees focusing on health and structural reform.

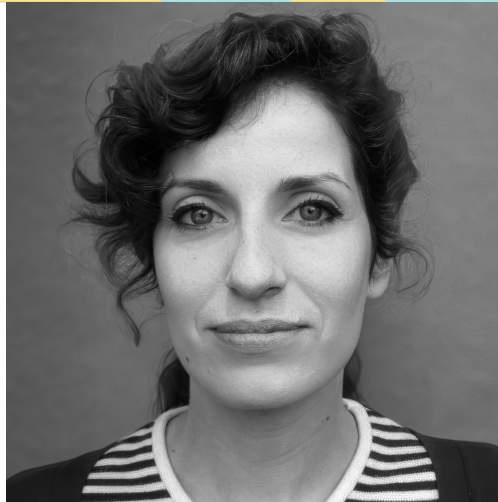


Anja Papuga

Anja Papuga (1999, Ljubljana) is a Slovenian photographer working across the fields of authorial, portrait, and documentary photography. She graduated from the Higher Vocational School of Material Design and Photography in Sežana, Slovenia. In her practice she embraces the subtle, symbolic, and personal, placing particular emphasis on the relationship between humans and nature. She explores perspectives on the body – especially the female body – and the social control exerted over it, approaching these themes with remarkable sensitivity and thoughtful reflection. Drawing on ecofeminist perspectives, she addresses the interconnected exploitation of women and the natural world, questioning systems of power, domination, and extraction while highlighting care, interdependence, and ecological awareness. Photography serves as her medium for storytelling, bringing together social engagement and environmental activism. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad. She has participated in numerous artistic projects, residencies, and professional development programmes. In recent years, she has collaborated with theatres, artists, cultural institutions, and independent creatives, documenting performances, artistic processes, and the people behind them.

“Connection turns personal expression into shared language — and that is how a small bridge between our worlds is built.”

<https://anjapapuga.com/>



Evelyn Pelayo

Evelyn Pelayo is a qualified artist, art therapist, educator and cultural producer who is passionate about using the arts as an accessible way to connect, support and empower people and communities. Since 2016, she has formed partnerships with third-sector organisations working in community and clinical settings to create innovative and inclusive craft-based Creative Health projects, events and activities.

Based in Bilbao, she has founded a community arts space, Konect Arts, and a Creative Health organization, Kultur Salud, where she is actively exploring the implementation of Arts in Health projects in the Basque country and beyond. She has experience in settings such as end-of-life care, adult mental health, learning disabilities, homelessness, bereavement, and chronic health conditions.



Nina Pertot Weis

Nina Pertot Weis (1984, Šempeter pri Gorici, Slovenia) is a dancer, choreographer, theatre maker, educator, and certified yoga teacher for adults and children. After graduating from the Secondary School for Arts (ballet programme) in Maribor, she studied at the Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance (SEAD) and continued her professional development through dance and theatre workshops in Slovenia and abroad. She collaborates with a range of artists as a performer and co-creator, developing contemporary dance and theatre projects for both adults and children. She also creates interactive movement performances and workshops for children. Alongside her artistic work, she is active as a movement mentor and consultant for theatre productions. She regularly leads movement workshops for children and, in recent years, has mentored young theatre makers in educational and professional theatre programmes. Her work combines artistic creation, movement, and education, with a focus on collaboration, creativity, and the expressive potential of the body.

What We Feel Can Move – A Dialogue Between Artistic Movement and Somatic Practice with Women Serving Sentences at Ig Prison

What We Feel Can Move is a participatory artistic practice that integrates somatic methodologies with movement-based creative processes, offering a space in which the body becomes a source of perception, expression, reflection, and connection. The workshop was developed and facilitated by the project's authors, Nina Pertot Weis and Maja Kalafatić, in collaboration with the Ig Prison Institution and the women serving their sentences there, and combines visual documentation, reflective discussion and live demonstrations of selected exercises.



Alice Presencer

Alice Presencer is a Copenhagen-based singing and dancing choreographer. Since completing her BA in Voice and Dance and MFA in Performing Arts, she has built a busy freelance career across the Nordic region, centred on interdisciplinary performance, site-specific work, and community engagement. Her endeavours include teaching, facilitation, singing, dancing, theatre, filmmaking, and choreography. Through integration of different artistic backgrounds, she strives to confront the norms within emotional expression.

<https://alicepresencer.com/>



Anna Prokopczuk-Kwapniewska

Anna Prokopczuk-Kwapniewska is a certified music therapist, musician, violist, vocalist, composer and arranger from Poland. Her work is rooted in the dialogue between artistic practice, therapy, education and social inclusion. She graduated in music therapy from the Academy of Music in Łódź and has many years of experience working with children, older adults, and people with disabilities, using music as a tool for communication, emotional expression, agency and wellbeing.

Alongside her therapeutic practice, Anna has been active on the Polish and international music scene for over fifteen years. She has collaborated with artists and bands including Julia Marcell, Waglewski Fisz Emade, Fisz Emade Tworzywo, Czesław Mozil and Wodecki/Pater, contributing viola, vocals and string arrangements. In 2025, she became a laureate of the Polish Culture and Health open call. Her project Songwriting – to hear yourself explored how co-creating songs with blind and visually impaired adults with multiple disabilities can support mental wellbeing, communication, social participation and the experience of being heard.

Songwriting – to Hear Yourself: Music Therapy, Agency and Wellbeing

This presentation introduces Songwriting – to hear yourself, a music therapy project carried out at the SOKRATES Centre in Warsaw with blind and visually impaired adults with multiple disabilities and complex health and social needs. Across 12 workshops, participants co-created five original songs through singing, songwriting, improvisation and shared decision-making.

The presentation focuses on songwriting as an accessible process that can strengthen agency, communication and social participation, showing how participants moved toward increasingly autonomous creative contribution. Anna will also share key findings from the project evaluation, suggesting that carefully designed music-based practice can support psychological wellbeing and agency among people with high support needs.



Susana Quaresma Vicente

Susana Quaresma is a multidisciplinary artist and researcher working at the intersection of voice, performance, and social impact. She is a PhD candidate in Performing Arts (UL/IPL), holds a Master's in Theatre, and a degree in Architecture. As the artistic director of the Corpo Sonoro ONG – where she coordinates the Cursus Festival – she brings 14 years of experience working with early childhood and 8 years with senior groups. She regularly acts as an actress and musician as well as arts mediator in inclusive settings (dementia and special educational needs) in collaboration with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. She is the co-founder of the award-winning vocal group Maria Monda and the musical director of the European project Alcabrichel: Living Memories of the River.

From Isolation to Connection: A Practical Toolkit for Artistic Mediation in Care Homes

Drawing from a decade of community-based practice in music and movement, this presentation delivers a practical toolkit designed to transition institutionalized seniors from passive isolation to active creative expression. Grounded in verbal and non-verbal communication, music and sensory exploration, the session demonstrates how carefully curated artistic triggers – such as rhythm, somatics, tactile objects, and oral histories – can validate identity and restore agency in care home settings, through what the presenters call the Biographical Resonance Method. Presented together with Martina Griewank.

“I am incredibly thrilled to join this event because it stands at the exact intersection of what drives my artistic practice: the vital cross-pollination between culture, community heritage, and creative health.”



Alina Ritter

Alina Ritter holds an MSc in Psychology from the University of Vienna. Her work focuses on mental health, psychological assessment, and prevention, with a particular interest in supporting adolescents and young adults. During her studies and professional training, she gained experience working with children and adolescents in educational and workshop settings. She designed and facilitated workshops on topics such as self-esteem, body image, eating disorders, mental health, and psychological well-being, aiming to promote resilience and mental health literacy among young people.

A key area of her academic and professional development has been the integration of research and practice: as part of a research internship at Tilia Health, a mental health startup, she conducted a clinical psychology study and contributed to innovative gamified assessment approaches for mental health screening and diagnostics. She is currently completing her training as a Clinical Psychologist at FEM Süd in Vienna, providing psychological counseling, clinical assessment, and treatment for adolescents and adults, in an evidence-based, person-centered approach that combines scientific rigor with practical relevance.

YOUareART

As part of the YOUareART project, psychologists and art educators offer free workshops for young people in museums. Using original works of art as a starting point for discussion, participants explore topics such as critical media literacy, self-esteem, body norms, and mental health directly within the museum setting. The project is implemented by FEM Süd & MEN and the Heidi Horten Collection, funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labor, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMASGPK).

“Because social participation and interaction can be an important aspect of mental health, and art is the wonderful medium to achieve this.”



Photo: Tony Gigov

Bea Robein

Bea began her career at the Vienna Volksoper. Since then, she has performed at venues including the Mozarteum, Vienna Musikverein, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and Bregenz Festival, among others. She is a cultural manager and has been active in the emerging field of Arts for Health since 2020: as a board member of Arts for Health Austria and on the 2022/23 “Kunst trifft Gesundheit” tour through Austria's state capitals. She appears as a speaker and moderator. Bea is co-founder of “Aufatmen für Long Covid” (2021) and of the start-up ArtWave, including the development of the ArtWave app and a first research project with the University of Vienna. Through the EU-funded CARE grant, together with Jennifer Davison as the “ArtWave Divas,” she brought their workshop “Serenade for the Soul” into a wide range of environments – from McKinsey, ASFINAG, Juridicum Vienna, and the Vienna University of Economics and Business, to Forum Alpbach and the Carinthian Summer.

Serenade for the Soul

Serenade for the Soul explores the transformative power of voice, breath, and music as accessible tools for emotional well-being. Developed by opera singers Jennifer Davison and Bea Robein, the format translates decades of stage experience into simple, practical techniques grounded in current research on arts and health. Serenade for the Soul is part of the EU-funded CARE project, exploring health and well-being in the workplace through arts-based interventions, and has also been delivered across healthcare and cultural settings, including hospital staff well-being initiatives. Davison and Robein are co-founders of ArtWave, an Arts for Health start-up currently developing a companion app, and were featured in the 2025 ORF documentary “Kunst als Medizin”.

“We love sharing what we've learned on opera stages – helping people to experience their voices as an inbuilt wellness-technology – and being a part of establishing arts & culture practices as the 5th pillar of human health and flourishing.”



Photo: Ettl

Gerlinde Rohrauer-Näf

Gerlinde Rohrauer-Näf, MPH, is Head of the Competence Centre for Future Health Promotion at Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG), Austria's National Public Health Institute. As a public and health expert and psychologist, her work focuses on health promotion and primary prevention, psychosocial health, and social participation. Together with her team, she develops, supports and evaluates national and international projects and is committed to advancing evidence-based approaches in research, practice and policy. Her work includes participatory strategy processes for health promotion, as well as a wide range of in-person and digital citizen participation formats, with a particular focus on engaging young people in issues related to mental health. She implements programmes that promote positive body image and mental wellbeing in Austria.

In particular, on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK), she currently coordinates and implements the programmes YOUareART and Body Project Austria in collaboration with partner organisations in the fields of health promotion, prevention, arts and culture, and research. She also leads the health promotion programme „ABC of Mental Health“ in Austria, which in the coming years will focus on strengthening social connectedness and reducing loneliness, as well as promoting digital wellbeing among young people.

“Health promotion programmes are increasingly addressing challenges such as loneliness among young people and the psychosocial impacts of social media and artificial intelligence. The intersection of culture and health promotion offers innovative and diverse perspectives on these challenges and opens up new pathways for dialogue, participation and creative solutions.”



Photo: Skokanitsch Fotografie

Martina Rössler

Martina Rössler is Programme Manager at RED NOSES International in Vienna, where she manages and coordinates international initiatives that combine creativity, learning and social impact. Working with colleagues from the RED NOSES network, she facilitates exchange among artists, programme teams and healthcare partners, creating spaces for collaboration.

Before joining RED NOSES International, Martina worked at the crossroads of education and social entrepreneurship, accompanying founders in developing ventures for positive social change. Curious by nature, she enjoys bringing together people from different backgrounds, encouraging shared learning and dialogue, and turning ideas into action.



Photo: Franzi Kreis

Jerca Rožnik Novak

Jerca Rožnik Novak is a Slovenian dancer, performer, and dance educator working between Ljubljana and Vienna. She trained in performance and dance pedagogy at Anton Bruckner Private University, Institute of Dance Arts, and holds a degree in social work from the University of Ljubljana. As a freelance dancer, she has worked with choreographers such as Willi Dorner, Rose Breuss, Matjaž Farič, and Johannes Wieland, among others. Since 2014, she has been a regular collaborator with SILK Fluegge and the editta braun company, where she continues to perform in new creations. Jerca is passionate about participatory performance formats and transdisciplinary practice, and co-founded echospiel, a duo exploring the connection between dance and percussion. She is currently developing new work with the Pinbody collective at Dance Theatre Ljubljana and co-creating Alice in Horrorland with Veronika Valdés (Zavod Flota), and teaches at the Anton Bruckner Private University, Institute of Dance Arts.

MOVE IT! 2.0 – It's Time to Give!

MOVE IT! 2.0 is a participatory dance and performance project developed with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including students who had recently arrived in Austria and were learning German in a school support programme. Over several weeks, dance, movement, music, rhythm, voice and play became tools for exploring connection, trust, self-expression and belonging beyond spoken language. At the centre of the process was a simple question: What can I give? Not materially, but as a person – energy, movement, an idea, care, trust, time or support. Through improvisation and choreographic tasks, participants brought their own movements, musical influences, languages and ideas into the process.

"I'm looking forward to connecting with people who are passionate about the intersection of culture and health, sharing our work, and learning from the diverse experiences and perspectives of others. I'm especially excited by the opportunity to exchange ideas, build new connections, and be inspired by artists and practitioners who are shaping this growing field together. Cannot wait!"

<https://jercarozniknovak.com/>



Photo: Julia Dragosits

Andrea Schmidt

Andrea Schmidt is an expert in Open Innovation in Science at the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft Open Innovation in Science (LBG OIS) Center. She specializes in the design and implementation of participatory and co-creative initiatives at the intersection of science, health, and the arts, with a strong focus on transdisciplinary collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

Andrea studied acting before earning a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Vienna and a PhD in Social and Economic Sciences from the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna). She has since built extensive expertise in digital innovation within the healthcare sector, leading innovation projects and labs within international programmes such as Interreg initiatives in the Danube Region, and developing digital solutions with universities, start-ups, public institutions, and civil society organisations. Andrea also has many years of teaching experience in innovation and project management, having lectured at institutions including IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences, FH WKW, WU Vienna, and the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (mdw).

Ankerpunkte

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but the quality of life of people living with dementia and their families can be improved. The Ankerpunkte project builds inclusive spaces where people with and without dementia come together through artistic and creative practices, fostering social connection and strengthening participation in rural communities.

“Art has the potential to enhance health and well-being while contributing to improved recovery. Expanding networks and increasing the visibility of arts and health initiatives are critical for securing their long-term financial sustainability and continued implementation.”

<https://ois.lbg.ac.at/>



Photo: Audrey Penven

Alec Dominique Fungi Schwenner

Alec Dominique Fungi Schwenner, aka Alec M Ballz (he/they), works with people with disabilities and facilitates a weekly circus workshop rooted in play, community and self-expression. Years ago, a clown told them, “You’re such a clown,” and they realized that they were, indeed, “such a clown.” Since then, they have surrounded themselves with more clowns.

Since 2023, they have co-produced and co-hosted The Irre.Gular Show in Berlin, a monthly performance series that brings together drag, comedy, puppetry, clowning, and fire performance. On Valentine’s Day 2024, they met fellow clown Bouba Haidar, director of Bulaban Circus Lebanon, and together they started the sibling circus: Bulaban Circus Berlin.

They have recently participated in the Artistic Exploration Lab of RED NOSES International (2025–2026) and the Erasmus+ programme Voices of Fabric: Creation and Animation of Puppets for Mental Health (2026). Since 2012, they have worked as a cultural arts manager at world-renowned venues and festivals and as an arts educator across age groups, realizing their own artistic visions alongside incredible collaborators.

<https://www.theirregularshow.de/>



Daragh Slacke

Daragh Slacke is an Irish musician, composer, facilitator and interdisciplinary artist based in County Cavan. For over 25 years he has worked across live performance, education and healthcare, creating music and participatory arts projects that bring together creativity, wellbeing and community.

Alongside his arts and health practice, Daragh is an active performer on the Irish live music scene. He performs throughout the year with a number of bands spanning folk rock, blues rock, funk and jazz, including Marcus Magee & The Hollow Men, the Clara Rose Blues Band, and Bluetack & The Greenhorns, appearing at festivals, theatres and venues across Ireland.

Drawing on songwriting, improvisation, storytelling and visual arts, Daragh creates spaces where people can express themselves, build confidence and discover their own creative voice. He is particularly interested in the relationship between music, health and human connection. His recent project, *Between Two Worlds*, with poet Noel Monahan, reimagines contemporary Irish poetry through music. Daragh's work has been supported by the Arts Council of Ireland, the Culture & Health Platform and local arts offices, and he is passionate about using creativity to foster connection, resilience and positive social change.

"I'm looking forward to connecting with artists, researchers and practitioners from across Europe, sharing ideas and learning from different approaches to culture and health. I'm especially excited by the opportunity to build new collaborations and to explore how creativity can continue to strengthen wellbeing, connection and community."



Ivana Slipakoff

Ivana Slipakoff is a cultural manager with a Master's degree in International Cultural Management and Social Innovation from the Complutense University. She has built an international career developing cultural projects with social impact.

Her work focuses on the design, coordination and production of interdisciplinary cultural programmes, with a strong emphasis on community engagement, institutional collaboration and access to culture. She has over seven years of experience within Madrid's cultural ecosystem, taking part in initiatives related to performing arts, cultural mediation and citizen participation.

Since 2023, she has been part of Fundación Cultura en Vena as Project Coordinator, promoting initiatives that connect culture and health in hospitals, rural communities and care spaces, from a perspective rooted in cultural rights, wellbeing and social transformation. She is Director of Programmes at Cultura en Vena and drives innovative projects using the arts as a tool for social transformation.



Petra Carina Stadoleanu

Petra Carina Stadoleanu is a museographer, curator and cultural mediator in contemporary art. Her interdisciplinary practice investigates the intersections of body, memory, and community through participatory approaches. Rooted in the belief that emotions, vulnerability, and the need for belonging represent a shared human language beyond cultural, geographical, and social differences, her work explores the conditions that enable empathy, dialogue, and collective experience.

Petra Carina develops curatorial and mediation projects that position art as a platform for emotional reflection and social engagement. She is interested in creating inclusive frameworks that encourage dialogue across diverse communities and perspectives. Her practice considers how individual narratives become collective, questioning the ways presence, gesture, and participation can generate spaces of encounter and mutual recognition. Recurring themes in her work include fragility, longing, belonging, healing, and the transformative potential of shared experience.



Photo: Halyna Zvarych

Olha Stavnykovich

Olha Stavnykovich is a Ukrainian visual artist and the founder of Olha Stavnykovich's ArtBrute Studio, an inclusive art studio in Lviv working with artists with Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, and other intellectual disabilities.

Her artistic practice focuses on socially engaged art, inclusion, and community-based creative processes. Through workshops, exhibitions, and collaborative projects, she explores how art can become a tool for communication, self-expression, and building meaningful connections between people.

Olha has participated in international art projects and cultural exchange programmes, sharing her experience in inclusive artistic practice and advocating for greater visibility and equal opportunities for artists with disabilities.

“We are all different, yet equally valuable.”



Yulia S. Tikhomirova

Yulia S. Tikhomirova is an artist, curator, and PhD candidate in the National Doctorate in Heritage Science at Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. She holds a BA in Journalism (St. Petersburg State University), an MA in Digital Media (Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna), and an MA in Arts, Museology, and Curatorship (University of Bologna). Tikhomirova's research focuses on collective art practices, participatory culture, and hybrid realities at the intersection of art, technology, and activism. She is a co-founder of TIST – This Is So Temporary, a collective that engages with art and politics in public space, fostering a critical approach to digital technologies and exploring the affordances of XR for community engagement.

<https://tistcollective.org/>



Monica Urian

Monica Urian is policy officer at the European Commission – Directorate General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. She is working on culture and health, artistic freedom and international cultural relations. Before joining the European Commission, Monica worked in the private and public sector in Belgium, France, Portugal and the USA. She graduated in international economic relations and European studies from the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, as well as at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. She is passionate about arts, culture, indigenous peoples, travelling and the connection to other living beings.



Carmen Valero

Carmen Valero leads Advocacy and Strategic Relations at RED NOSES International, where she works at the intersection of health, wellbeing, and the arts, developing advocacy activities across the organisation's partner network. Her role involves developing strategic partnerships, as well as contributing to several initiatives at the crossroads of arts and health — including, e.g. a Policy Brief on children's rights to arts and play in hospital settings as well as Creative Europe Cooperation Projects.

Carmen's broader background includes managing cultural, development and democracy sector projects. Her experience extends to working in the European Parliament and the International Ombudsman Institute, where she focused on fundamental rights, public opinion and electoral processes. Carmen studied Political Science at the University of Vienna and Cultural Management at Vienna's "Institut für Kulturkonzepte."

"The Culture and Health community has real potential to strengthen our healthcare systems — enriching the care they provide, and quite possibly reducing costs. The conference is a great opportunity to sharpen our practices and discuss with decision-makers how to integrate them more deeply. And as always in this community: I'm certain it will happen with joyfulness and a lot of human connection."



Aleksandra Widhofner

Mag.a Aleksandra Widhofner is Deputy Head of the Department for European and International Cultural Policy at the Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport (BMWKMS). She is the Austrian representative in, among others, the EU Culture Committee, the Creative Europe Programme Committee, and the EU expert groups “Culture and Health” and “Culture and Sustainable Development.”



Marie Wittig

Originally from Germany and now based in Brussels, Belgium, Marie brings a background spanning education, the arts, and cultural policy to her work at the intersection of culture and health.

Since 2024, Marie has worked at Culture Action Europe, where she manages the Culture & Health Platform. In this role, she coordinates a diverse network from across Europe, facilitating knowledge exchange and building bridges between the cultural and health sectors. Her work involves overseeing platform activities, curating content and events, taking care of the Platform Artists and their projects, and creating spaces for dialogue that advance the recognition of culture as a vital contributor to health and wellbeing.

"I'm looking forward to the amazing keynote speakers, to learning more about our artists and the stories behind their projects, just as well as to the moments behind the scenes: meeting new people, reconnecting with valued colleagues, and enabling and watching new connections take root and grow."



Photo: Barbara Mair

Edith Wolf Perez

Edith Wolf Perez, MA, is co-founder and chairwoman of ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA. She completed a dance degree at the Laban Centre and a postgraduate degree in European Cultural Policy at Warwick University, UK. Since the early 1980s, she has worked as a dancer in health and community institutions, as a cultural journalist, editor, author, advisory board member of arts funding commissions, festival director and project manager of EU projects. Edith is an expert in competence groups and policy committees at national and European levels and a member of the Advisory Board of the Dance & Creative Wellness Foundation. She is the editor of 'Arts and Health – Austria in an International Context' (2023). She was co-leader of the EU expert group Culture and Health, which was set up by the European Commission in 2024.

"I am looking forward to another celebration of the role of culture on our health and well-being in the society of the European socially engaged arts community."



Photo: Andrii Tsykota

Veronika Yadukha

Veronika Yadukha is a Ukrainian transmedial translator, ceramic artist, and curator working at the intersection of literature, material practice, and other arts. She is a co-founder of the TRANSLATORIUM Literature and Translation Festival and an art curator at the Translatorium NGO. Yadukha's projects have been presented internationally and include functional ceramic objects, clay musical instruments, and sculptural installations based on literary works. Her current research focuses on transmedial translation in contemporary art and clay as a medium of communication across sensory modalities. She is also a curator and lecturer at Zminotvortsy, an educational organisation for teenagers, where she develops and facilitates educational programmes (including the course “Culture”), creating accessible and participatory learning formats. In addition, she teaches and curates a ceramics workshop for people with intellectual disabilities at the NGO “Maysternia Mrii” in Lviv, Ukraine.

<https://www.veronikayadukha.com/>



Nicholas Yatromanolakis

Nicholas Yatromanolakis is Founder & CEO of the Policy Lab and former Deputy Minister at the Government of Greece. His work has consistently focused on turning complex problems into strategies, institutions, partnerships, policies and initiatives that deliver measurable impact at scale.



Viltautė Žemelytė

Viltautė Žemelytė is Head of the International Programme Department at RED NOSES International, where she facilitates artistic laboratories, innovation processes, and co-creation formats, while overseeing the development of programming tools and methodologies used across the organisation's international network. Her work brings together culture, education, and healthcare, drawing on cross-sectorial project management experience. Viltautė has been involved in numerous independent performing arts projects in Lithuania and Austria, alongside three major international projects funded by Creative Europe and the EU's Culture 2007–2013 programme. She holds a master's degree in Cultural Policy and Management from the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts.