

**EDN Conference 2024 Programme**

**[How Can We Move? - Wellbeing in Dance | Dance in Wellbeing](#)**

**29 November 2024**

10:00 CET

**Movement Session “Energised and Grounded”**

**Jean-Baptiste Baele**, dance artist, choreographer, and educator (Norway/Belgium)

10:10 CET

**Opening Words**

EDN Co-Presidents; **Louise Costelloe**, programme producer, Dance Ireland (Ireland) & **Laurent Meheust**, director, Le Gymnase CDCN (France)

10:15 CET

**Opening Words**

**Georg Häusler**, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport in the European Commission (DG EAC) (Belgium)

10:20 CET

**Provocations “Practicing Care: Looking Through the Lens of Dance Organisations”**

EDN Co-President **Louise Costelloe**, programme producer, Dance Ireland (Ireland)

How do we take care of artists, arts workers and audiences in a time of great economic precarity and political turmoil?

Can we hold space for practices of care when funding, policy and culture pushes us towards burnout, and we are fighting to keep cultural freedom from political interference?

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the rapid changes in our ecology of dance, and the challenges that face us, so where do we start?

10:30 CET

**Policy Insight “Let’s Move! How to Connect Culture Policy and Funding With Health and Wellbeing at the EU level”**

**Monica Urian**, policy officer at the European Commission (Belgium), conversation with **Monica Gillette**, dance dramaturg and facilitator (Germany)

There has been a major increase of research into the effects of culture and the arts on health and wellbeing, alongside developments in practice and policy activities in different EU countries. The polycrisis epoch that we are living in, from the covid-19 pandemic to the war of aggression against Ukraine, from climate change to the rise of the extreme right, brings the spotlight on the importance of culture and arts health, particularly mental health, but also for individual and community wellbeing.

This intervention will analyse recent developments in this area from the point of view of the Directorate-General for Education, youth, sport and culture, which implements the EU culture policies and oversees the Creative Europe programme.



10:50 CET

**Lecture "Promoting Better Working Practices for Mental Health in the Dance Scene"**

**Luísa Saraiva**, choreographer, dancer and researcher with a background in Clinical Psychology (Germany/Portugal)

We will address the topic of mental health in the dance scene with the goal of raising awareness about the importance of fostering good mental health practices and initiating a more consistent discussion about the community's needs and vulnerabilities. The environment and working conditions in the arts and culture sectors present a unique set of challenges for developing professional identities, building a sense of career, and managing the balance between work and personal life. Academic research consistently highlights that cultural professionals are a vulnerable group when it comes to mental health issues. However, there seem to be limited spaces for discussing the immediate and long-term impacts of work-related stress on mental health and well-being. What are spaces that promote mental health? What practices should be adopted? What guidelines and policies do we need?

11:05 CET

**Good Practice "Wellbeing Starts with True Inclusion: Wellbeing in the Rehearsal Spaces"**

**Monique Smith McDowell**, choreographer, performer and artistic audio describer (Germany/UK)

Monique Smith-McDowell believes wellbeing starts at allowing everyone to have a sense of belonging. Smith-McDowell discusses the impact that true acts of inclusion have on the wellbeing of the performer. Speaking from the perspective of both a dancer and choreographer she shares what it means to walk into a room that often excludes various marginalised communities. How do we learn, enrich and evolve our practices by hiring individuals from these communities in our workspaces? How do we nurture and care for the wellbeing of the individuals entering our spaces?

11:15 CET

**Movement Session "Energised and Grounded"**

**Jean-Baptiste Baele**, dance artist, choreographer, and educator (Norway/Belgium)

11:25 CET

Break

11:30 CET

**EDN Research Publication Presentation**

**Monica Gillette**, dance dramaturg and facilitator (Germany)

Monica Gillette will share highlights from the newly published, EDN commissioned report titled, "[Practices of Care and Wellbeing in Contemporary Dance - Evidence From the Field](#)". The report focuses on the many ways in which dance can enhance

wellbeing in society, as well as underscore the challenges dance professionals face in regards to their own wellbeing. The report also addresses the various tensions and concerns about the instrumentalization of the artform and offers recommendations to counter those concerns.

11:40 CET

**Good Practice “Wellbeing in the Workplace”**

EDN Board Member **Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski**, cultural worker, curator, writer and researcher (North Macedonia)

[Nomad Dance Academy](#) (NDA) is an informal contemporary dance network active since 2005. It promotes dance education, artistic creation, and advocacy in the post-Yugoslav and Balkan region. NDA addresses cultural policy challenges, improves professional work conditions, and fosters a dynamic cultural space. As independent scenes face precariousness, NDA develops care practices, including advocacy sessions over the past decade. These practices counter project-driven demands for efficiency, leading to exhaustion and self-exploitation. By emphasising small yet meaningful efforts, NDA transforms workplaces into supportive environments, challenging productivity frameworks.

11:55 CET

**Dance Film “In My Skin”**

**Sándor M. Salas**, film director (Spain)  
Screening with support by Cinedans

Far from homogenizing parameters, flamenco uses the subversive power of art to enhance the diversity of bodies on stage. Disability is no longer a limit, but a creative starting point.

12:10 CET

**Lecture “Creating a Culture of Care”**

**Emily Jenkins**, dance artist, founder of [Move Dance Feel](#) (Netherlands/UK)

Dancing in community can give rise to a palpable sense of care. Feelings of care are generated through the expressive and reciprocal nature of dancing itself, as well as through the specific way that artist facilitators invite dancers into relationship - with themselves and with others. Dancing together can therefore be a vehicle for fostering, and practising in the space between us, a culture of care. Drawing on a decade of experience working at the intersection of dance and health, [Emily Jenkins](#) explores this subject further from the perspective of a freelance dance artist and Founder-Director of an award winning dance company.

12:25 CET

**Discussion “Transforming the Dance Field through Community”**

**Roberto Casarotto**, co-director of Aerowaves (Italy) & **Markéta Vacovská**, dancer and choreographer (Czechia) in conversation with **Monica Gillette**



An important and under-discussed aspect of the many ways dance can positively impact the wellbeing of society is how such practices and endeavours nurture artistic development, progress the artform and shape the way dance organisations are run. In this conversation we will delve into personal experiences and observations regarding the impact of community engaged work on the dance field.

12:50 CET

**Movement Session “Energised and Grounded”**

**Jean-Baptiste Baele**, dance artist, choreographer, and educator (Norway/Belgium)

**Speakers**

*In order of appearance*

**Monica Gillette** is a dance dramaturg and facilitator. After dancing professionally she now guides multiple projects with dance as a pathway for social engagement and multigenerational cultural exchange.

As a dramaturg she accompanied several European funded projects: [Migrant Bodies - Moving Borders](#) (2017-2019), [Empowering Dance](#) (2018-2023) and [Dancing Museums - The Democracy of Beings](#) (2020-2021) and continues to accompany [Dance Well](#) (2022-2025) and [Moving Borders](#) (2023-2025). For each of those projects she authors and edits digital publications for the dissemination of the knowledge and skills developed in the project. For the writing of this report, Monica Gillette draws from the experiences of facilitating embodied sessions and the transformation process with the team at [Tanzhaus Zürich](#). Together with Gwen Hsin-Yi Chang she is newly appointed as the Artistic Direction team for the [Tanztriennale](#), taking place in Hamburg in 2026.

**Jean-Baptiste Baele** is a contemporary dance artist, choreographer, and educator with an extensive international career. Originally from Madagascar and raised in Belgium, Jean-Baptiste combines his passion for social behaviours and physical storytelling with his technical expertise. As the founder of Nabinam Dance Company and the Step Forward Training Program, he strives to cultivate artistic growth and community engagement in Kristiansand where he is now based.

**Louise Costelloe** (EDN Co-President, Dance Ireland) is currently Programme Producer at Dance Ireland, where she works with the Dance Ireland team and membership to create opportunities for dance artists and the art form of dance to flourish. Her work in arts and dance management encompasses engagement with young people and communities, artist development, and programming performances and participatory experiences in dance. She is interested in dance dramaturgy, socially engaged practice and choreographic thinking.

**Laurent Meheust** (EDN Co-President, Le Gymnase / CDCN) is director of Le Gymnase / CDCN (Roubaix / France), and develops international projects connecting to the residencies program and annual festivals. He previously took part in the construction of KLAP Maison pour la danse in Marseille and worked as guest lecturer at the Université de Provence for the License and Masters in Cultural Mediation and in the Art and Cultural Heritage programmes.



**Georg Häusler** is currently the Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport in the European Commission (DG EAC). Prior to that, he was Director in another Commission department for seven years. He joined the Commission in 1999 and has had several senior posts including as Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Dacian Ciolos, from 2009 to 2014. Before he began his Commission career, he was Secretary General of an EU-wide NGO. He studied law (PhD in 1993). He is 56 years old and married, with one son.

**Monica Urian** is policy officer at the European Commission – Directorate General Education and Culture, responsible for international cultural relations, artistic freedom and culture, health and well-being. She was previously the programme manager in the same EU institution responsible for the 'audience development' priority within the Creative Europe Programme – Culture. 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 Babes-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 nature.

**Luísa Saraiva** is a choreographer and performer born in Porto, Portugal, and based between Porto and Berlin. She studied psychology at the University of Porto and dance at the Folkwang Arts University in Essen. Her artistic practice explores the language of the body and voice and lies at the intersection of movement and musical composition. In 2018, the piece "A CONCERT" in collaboration with Lea Letzel was awarded the NRW Ground Support Prize. She was selected for the danceWeb scholarship in 2019 and in the season of 2019/2020 she was one of the choreographers-in-residence at the K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg. As a curator she worked together with the Folkwang Museum in Essen and Galeria Municipal do Porto on interdisciplinary exhibition and symposium formats. In 2022/2023 she was a recipient of the Tanzpraxis Scholarship from the City of Berlin. In the last years she has been advocating for mental health awareness in the dance community through promoting workshops and talks in collaboration with Sophiensaele, Alkantara Festival, K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg, Tanzkongress and Tanzbüro Berlin.

**Monique Smith-McDowell** is a choreographer, performer and artistic audio describer based in Hamburg, Germany. A graduate of London Contemporary Dance School, she has worked with Richard Alston Dance Company, Michael Turinsky and Ursina Tossi among others. Through Monique's work, she aims to highlight and give space to the perspectives of the marginalised in relation to socio-political issues. Creating theatre that impacts its audience, tells a story and through its emotive atmosphere, challenges the boundaries, barriers and perspectives both in and out of the theatre doors.

**Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski** is a cultural producer, researcher, and curator at the intersection of dance, theatre, and visual arts performance, art history, cultural policy, independent cultural scenes, feminist, and environmental (curatorial) practices. She works as a freelancer and as a programme director of Lokomotiva, Skopje. Currently, she is a co-researcher for the NADA Digital Archive of Dance and Performance; co-curator of the exhibition Dancing, Resisting, (Un)working- Aspects of Dance as Cultural, Political, and Art Work in Yugoslavia and After, and Performance Platform Festival in Skopje, curator of the



international school “Curating in Context”, and co-mentor of the Critical Practice (Made in Yu) and Re-Imagine project. She teaches and writes, was educated as a dancer, is an art historian, and holds a PhD from the Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade.

**Sándor M. Salas** (Sevilla, 1983) graduated in Editing and Digital Post-Production at Escuela Andaluza de Cinematografía (EAC). He likes exploring audiovisual language and his work includes creative documentary, experimental cinema and video-art. He has previously directed the video essay «Seismic Silence» (2020), premiered and awarded at Sevilla European Film Festival. His short films have been selected in festivals like DocsMX, Alcances or Alcine and nominated in ASECAN Awards.

**Emily Jenkins** is an established, international dance artist with an embedded social and wellbeing practice. She has worked in the dance sector for over fifteen years, designing, implementing and artistically leading life enhancing dance initiatives with both cultural and health organisations.

In 2016 Emily founded [Move Dance Feel](#), a company offering dance to women living with and beyond cancer, and works closely with cancer support services to incorporate dance into their care programmes. In 2020 she was selected as a [Churchill Fellow](#), supporting her to spearhead an international #danceincancercare movement – creating a network of artists, researchers, healthcare professionals and students operating in this space.

Emily currently serves as a committee member for the [International Association for Dance Medicine and Science](#), specialising in advocacy. Recognising a lack of training opportunities for artists in this field, she initiated a pioneering professional development programme; [Dance and Health - Advancing Your Practice](#).

**Roberto Casarotto** is the Co-director of Aerowaves, the European Platform for Dance promoting cross-border mobility of the work of emerging dance artists.

He is the initiator of Dance Well – Movement research for Parkinson and other processes aimed at the engagement of communities and participation of citizens in cultural activities and dance. From 2006 till 2022 Roberto has been responsible for the dance projects and programmes at Centro per la Scena Contemporanea of Bassano del Grappa (CSC) and Operaestate Festival Veneto. Prior to working for dance organisations, Roberto was a professional contemporary dancer.

He is the author of the book *Nigel Charnock* published in 2009 by L'Epos. In 2015-18 he was Artistic Director of Balletto di Roma, and board member of European Dancehouse Network from 2015 till 2021.

**Markéta Vacovská** is a choreographer and performer based in the Czech Republic. She graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (Dept. of Nonverbal Theater). She currently collaborates with Spitfire and Tantehorse Company as a dance artist, co-creates the DanceWell community in the Czech Republic and is actively engaged in social work within early childhood education and care programmes for socially excluded families.

