

## ADVOCATING FOR DANCE

### Key Takeaways

This summary gathers key insights, strategies, and challenges from discussions on local advocacy in the dance sector. These conversations took place during **EDN's Online Network Meeting on 27 and 28 January 2025**, bringing together representatives from dance development organisations across Europe. Through their shared experiences and expertise, representatives of local dance communities shed light on the evolving landscape of dance advocacy.

### Understanding Advocacy in the Dance Sector

#### Challenges & Common Threats

- **Lack of Systematic Advocacy Efforts:** Small teams struggle to maintain continuous advocacy efforts beyond reactive actions.
- **Visibility Issues:** Policymakers often do not recognise or understand contemporary and experimental dance, making advocacy more difficult.
- **Fragmentation in Representation:** Unlike other arts sectors, dance often lacks strong advocacy organisations or syndicates.
- **Political & Structural Barriers:** In some contexts, formal advocacy mechanisms are absent, requiring alternative approaches.
- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Navigating relationships with funders while advocating for change presents potential conflicts of interest.

#### Effective Advocacy Methods & Strategies

- **Building Systematic & Continuous Advocacy:** Advocacy should be proactive rather than reactive, ensuring engagement before issues arise.
- **Enhancing Visibility:** Inviting policymakers to events and performances helps them understand and appreciate dance.
- **Creating Collaborative Advocacy Platforms:** Developing local advocacy groups can organise and structure collective efforts.

- **Empowering Artists as Advocates:** Encouraging artists to engage directly with policymakers strengthens the sector's voice.
- **Leveraging European Networks for Local Advocacy:** Citing European-level support can strengthen local advocacy arguments.

## Building Relationships with Key Stakeholders

- **Developing Meaningful Relationships:** Long-term engagement with policymakers and institutional staff fosters trust and understanding.
- **Utilising Personal & Institutional Connections:** Advocacy is more effective when engaging the right people at the right time.
- **Creating Unified Fronts:** Small organisations can collaborate with larger institutions for greater influence.
- **Exploring Alternative Communication Channels:** Building relationships with public administrators can often prove more impactful to those with policymakers.

## Tools for Advocacy Success

- **Sector-Wide Collaboration:** Establish alliances with other arts disciplines for broader influence.
- **Structured Meetings & Advocacy Groups:** Regular meetings within sectoral groups can facilitate ongoing discussions and coordinated efforts.
- **Educational Resources & Training:** Develop advocacy toolkits and mentorship programs to equip artists and organisations with effective communication skills.
- **Public Engagement & Audience Mobilisation:** Encouraging audiences to advocate for dance strengthens public support.
- **Data-Driven Advocacy:** Using research and sector data can provide concrete evidence for policy-making.

# Trans-Local & European Advocacy: EDN's Role

## EDN's Current Advocacy Approaches

- **Serving as a Network of Networks:** EDN plays a consulting role in EU cultural policy discussions.
- **Providing a Platform for Knowledge Sharing:** EDN's advocacy tools support members at various levels.

## Expanding EDN's Advocacy Impact

- **Structured Peer Learning:** Monthly meetings or workshops can provide spaces for members to share advocacy experiences.
- **Developing Practical Advocacy Tools:** A structured approach, including case studies and templates, can support members in designing local advocacy strategies.
- **Addressing Prejudice & Structural Barriers:** Advocacy must also tackle broader issues like inclusivity, social mobility, and systemic biases within the sector.
- **Balance global advocacy trends** with specific local realities for effective trans-local influence.
- **Involving Audiences in Advocacy Efforts:** Expanding beyond policymakers to engage audiences can create stronger community support for dance.

## Future Directions & Recommendations

### Key Takeaways

- Advocacy requires continuity, adaptability, and collaboration.
- Recognizing different advocacy scales (local, regional, national, international) helps tailor strategies effectively.
- Artists should be involved in advocacy actions as their voices offer a unique perspective.
- Networks can serve as advocacy incubators, fostering knowledge-sharing and joint actions.

### Next Steps

- Develop an EDN Atelier on Advocacy Tools to equip members with effective strategies.
- **Cross-Network Support and Solidarity:** Collaborate with other networks to strengthen advocacy impact.
- Expand communication strategies to include audience activism as a form of advocacy.
- Encourage cross-sector collaborations to strengthen advocacy within and beyond dance.



Performance Grand Jeté by Silvia Gribaudi - photo by Rosaliina Elgland

The future of dance advocacy lies in solidarity and shared values. By organising events where members, policy officers and policymakers can connect directly, EDN can strengthen local and EU advocacy efforts. Highlighting dance's impact on society will further showcase the sector's value.

This report is brought to you by Embodied Transformations, EDN's EU-funded network project. It connects contemporary dance professionals, organisations, and communities across Europe to foster a stable and interdependent dance ecosystem.

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