

# END EVALUATION – DRAFT REPORT

29.04.2022

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## 2. SUMMARY

### **2.1. A relevant and well executed programme that generally attains its objectives.**

The first multi-year programme in the North (Belgium) that Africalia has managed between 2017 and 2021, can be seen as an essential addition to the funding landscape of the artistic sector in Belgium.

Through the spectre of vector of the Global Citizenship Education, it has done much more than simply finance projects that included artists from the African continent or from the African diaspora in Belgium.

By creating the opportunities for increased programming of artists from Africa and the diaspora, it has allowed institutional (structural) partners to shift the paradigm, or to consolidate a precarious shift in paradigm, of how African art is treated, moving it more from a position of exception and otherness, to a more natural and central position.

At the same time, the programme has offered opportunities to a number of smaller and more independent actors, often organisations from the African diaspora in Belgium, to access support that was otherwise very hard to access, and create projects that allow visibility for their work and professional growth that points to a sustainable change.

Thus, both through the actions implemented by the structural partners, and by the smaller independent organisations, an impressively large number of arts professionals have been able to participate in processes and interact through professional encounters, in ways that allow them to shift their scope and have a deeper and thus more emancipated experience of African contemporary creation, and of the topics and urgencies that are the foundation of contemporary artists to create.

This is achieved through enhanced networks (both between Belgian and African actors, and within Belgium), and by enabling platforms of exchange in professional practice and discursive formats that allow a critical foundation of this gradual shift.

## **2.2. Areas of improvement**

Nonetheless, a series of critical observations can be noted that point to areas where the programme could be improved.

### **2.2.1. A clear definition of the projects that can be supported.**

The demand for definition can increase the relevance and impact of the programme, as the budgets are limited (and very much spread), and an inclusion of a too high variety of formats, impact logic, artistic disciplines etc leads to too much diversity in the character of the projects (some level of diversity is obviously essential) and hence a large spread of the funds that can appear somewhat random.

At the same time, a clearer definition of the projects to be supported (and potentially a deeper differentiation within the calls for application) can lead to a stronger profiling of the programme, a more durable impact and stronger result.

#### **2.2.1.1. Art from Africa vs. Art from the diaspora**

The programme is defined within the field of activity that Africalia covers (arts and culture) and within the vector that creates the institutional justification for the financing of the programme (Global Citizenship Education). However, beyond that, it lacks definition. The logic of showing work from the African continent to a Belgian audience (whatever the demographic constitution of this audience), is one of cultural exchange and broadening horizons, and fighting stereotypes. The logic of supporting creative work from the African diaspora in Belgium, is one of emancipation, of changing the institutional framework of the arts in Belgium in a way that it becomes more representative<sup>7</sup>. Both logics are quite separate and distinct. Within the programme they are put together without distinction, which creates a lack of clarity about what the programme is intended to do. A clearer definition of both logics, and potentially separately formulated calls, could enhance their impact, and the ways in which they can connect and reinforce each other.

#### **2.2.1.2. What is defined as art?**

There could be a clearer definition or focus on what is Art and which disciplines or formats are selected to be supported, because support could have a more optimal impact or is most relevant. When a discursive / socio-political element is included in the project (e.g. some of the round tables in the project Congo 60, by Roots Events, or in the project Sankara by Afropean) it is clear that it must be supportive to an artistic project / creation. Africalia, within this next phase of the programme 2022-2026, could also analyse the needs and opportunities that exist according to artistic disciplines and formats, in order to prioritize some over others where the need and the potential impact is higher.

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<sup>7</sup> An illustration of the systematic underrepresentation of professionals can be found in this report by the Roi Baudoin Foundation. [https://www.craom.be/wa\\_files/2017\\_zoombelgafr\\_fr.pdf](https://www.craom.be/wa_files/2017_zoombelgafr_fr.pdf). The focus on creatives from the diaspora aims partly at countering this tendency in the field of the professional arts.

As the programme is founded on the vector of the GCE, artistic disciplines that can have a clear topical focus because they are narrative (film, documentary, theatre, literature, some visual arts practice) are clearly given preference over non narrative practices (music, dance, most visual arts). This is normal and logical within the frame of the programme, but does include a danger to support African art only when it is narrative, and thus contributing to a certain stigmatization rather than fighting it.

#### **2.2.1.3. How to define eligibility?**

When artists from the African continent and/or their work is invited to Belgium, some criteria are clear. Most visible is the list of countries mentioned above. Potential ambiguous cases (as artists are more and more international these days, and can sometimes hardly be pinned down to one geographical provenance) can be assessed by the structural partners or the Africalia jury in the case of the Calls for Applications. In the case of the Belgian Diaspora projects, the distinctions are sometimes problematic. The programme has to gain by focusing on creation by artists from Africa and from the African diaspora. Projects like 'les Hommes Debout' by Muyira Arts and 'Embodying the City' by Out of Focus show work by white European artists, inspired by or interacting with an African reality. This is not ideal for the definition of the programme as one supporting contemporary African or diaspora creation.

Belgian-African co-creation can also be relevant to include, but then it must be explicitly referred to as such, and must be the product of an equitable co-authorship.

The complex question on where one draws the border between those in Belgium who can be considered to be from the diaspora, and those who can't, is not treated in this evaluation. Suffice to say that it seems to have been a topic of animated discussion at some point in the jury of the call for applications, and could be a problematic issue of contention at some point in the future, if it remains unresolved.

#### **2.2.2. defining the institutional and organisational to optimise the multiplying potential**

The structural partners all do work of great merit in including contemporary African creation in their programme and activities. They do so in different formats, i.e., programming and showing work (KVS, Vooruit, AFF, FIFF), supporting new productions (KVS, Graphoui, Vooruit), hosting resident artists (Wiels, Graphoui) and organizing meetings and discursive events (les Halles, AFF).

There are more big institutional partners in Belgium, who do work very much along the lines of these actors, in the sense of creating platforms to show contemporary creation and also including / providing platforms to creation from the diaspora (e.g. Kaaithheater, de Singel, Bozar, various festivals, ...)

Although it is clear that it's not possible to support all institutions that could be structural partners, and the ones chosen have realized relevant activities with the intended impact, it is not entirely clear why they are chosen and not some others,

and how this choice impacts a dynamic that is wider and touches on the whole arts sector in Belgium. The recent inclusion of Africalia in the RAB – BKO in Brussels is an interesting step in profiling the programme beyond the selected few organisations and creating potential for sharing good practices and synchronizing some approaches for higher impact.

In the same sense, later on, I will comment on the Cultural Cooperation Platform, and the fact that it could be considered to become a wider and more flexible working group, to support the work of Africalia in Belgium, if indeed the content it handles is well managed by Africalia as the coordinator of the platform.

### **2.2.3. Capacity building for Diaspora collectives.**

As mentioned above, the logic of supporting artistic creation from the diaspora is different from the logic of presenting artists from Africa in Belgium, and relates more to the need to emancipate and capacitate, so that the (subsidized) cultural offer in Belgium can be more representative and inclusive of the diversity of the country, and thus can also include more different views of the world we live in, thus contributing to GCE.

Due to the relative exclusion of creators from the diaspora, and the distrust they have in the white institutions, creatives from the diaspora organize themselves, thus creating a very interesting and dynamic, often young, landscape of new organisations and collectives that represent the creatives from the various parts of this community.

As the white institutions change and try to be more representative and inclusive in their programming, they liaise with these small diaspora organisations and include them in their programming, or even outsource part of the programming to them.

However, there is a problem of administrative and management capacity in these organisations, as the same opportunities for training and gaining experience within the institutional sector have been absent.

This could be part of the reason that within the management structures of the big institutions, we only see very slowly and in limited numbers an uptake of members of the diaspora. It surely is the main reason why many of these organisations struggle to survive and overcome the problems they encountered after the first big project they do.

The Africalia programme could focus on these collectives, in its call for applications, and include in its support also a budget for a support point that can assist with admin and management questions and provide practical training. How such a support could take shape is to be better defined, or could be a topic of discussion for the Cultural Cooperation Platform.