



# **Gender Equality & Diversity in Theatre**



**Suggestions and recommendations for  
publicly funded theatres, policy makers  
and funders at the local, national and  
European level**



## **This paper distils ideas and recommendations on Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres.**

Since 2017, the European Theatre Convention has developed “ENGAGE – empowering today’s audiences through challenging theatre”, thanks to a co-funding by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. It is an international programme for European theatres to diversify their artistic work and professional context, to offer theatre as an open, social and democratic space for exchange and reflexion. The programme focused on three aesthetic practices and a core principle, jointly identified by ETC and its member theatres, who researched, developed, tested and co-created internationally in the following fields: youth theatre, participatory theatre, digital theatre and diversity in theatre.

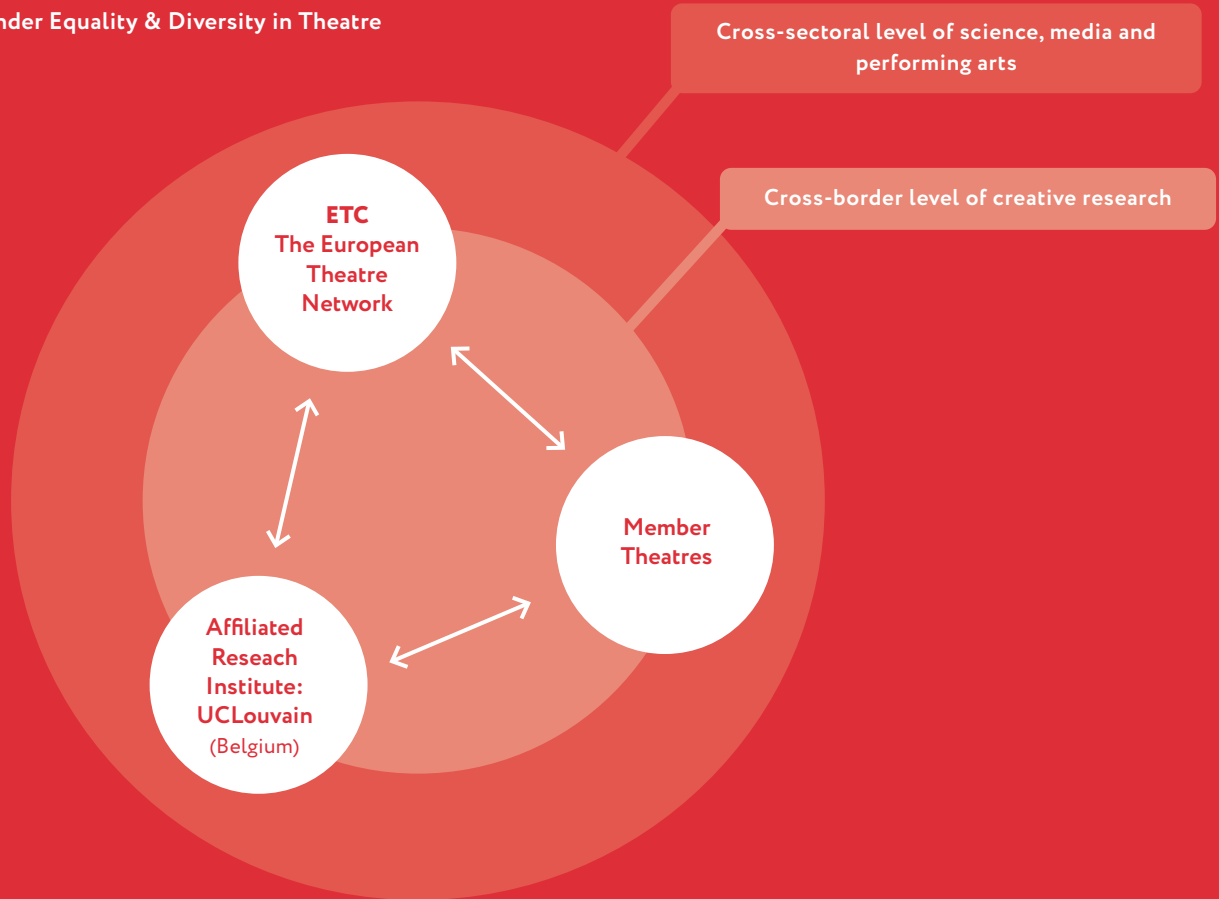
In 2019, ETC commissioned the first cross-European study on Gender Equality and Diversity in European theatres. The ETC member theatres who responded are characterised by a noteworthy presence of women, as well as a noteworthy absence of the other “so-called” minorities. The study concludes that much must still be done to achieve a level of diversity that corresponds to that in European societies. The suggestions arising from the research are presented below as an advocacy plan aimed at theatres, funders and policy makers, sharing the most important learning.

Since the start of the ENGAGE programme, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have necessitated new modes of artistic collaboration, so that engagement through research, development, testing and co-creation can continue across international projects. The pandemic also has a significant impact on gender equality and diversity issues in the cultural sector. The learning and recommendations for gender equality and diversity have therefore created a valuable knowledge resource for theatre practitioners and policymakers, which can be further built on in the new context.



# ETC Ecosystem

International Collaboration and Research  
Gender Equality & Diversity in Theatre



Timeline





## Suggestions for publicly funded theatres

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### Take a 360° look at your institution

- » The ETC research surveyed its member theatres during the theatre season 2019-2020 to analyse the current state of (in)equality and diversity both in terms of the theatre as a workplace (diversity among the people who create the artistic works) and its cultural programming and productions. With some significant findings, publicly funded theatres are recommended to look at the full results, and consider these within their own institution. ETC and the research team have made available a self-monitoring grid to encourage theatres and cultural institutions to undergo this 360° analysis.

### Look at variations between the workplace and cultural outputs

- » The ETC research brought to light differences between the aspects surveyed. It is useful for theatres and cultural institutions to look at these areas in detail, and to discuss the findings within their teams.
- » For the workplace findings, it was found that the demographics of those who responded were in large majority white, able-bodied and cis-gender. Therefore, it is recommended to look at the theatres' recruitment policies. The ETC code of conduct 'Diversity in Action' (approved by members in December 2018) states that the ETC Member theatres commit to "ensur[ing]

gender equality and increased diversity among theatre staff employees".

- » It was found that more women (ca. 60%) than men were employed in the theatres. However, there were significant differences in the positions and seniority levels of women and men. For example, more men than women work as technicians, while more women than men work in the theatre administration; more men than women were in higher level management positions; more men occupied the artistic roles with greatest agency in terms of cultural outputs, such as author, director, music. It is recommended that theatres look at their recruitment and employee appraisal policies to encourage women to enter technical jobs (this also needs addressing at the level of training and education); to ensure non-discriminatory work policies/ethos in all departments (also addressed through training); to ensure that gender equality and diversity are taken into account across all work departments and levels of seniority.
- » There was significant inequality in the contractual area (more men than women had a permanent and full-time contract), as well as in terms of responsibility, seniority and appointment to artistic leadership roles. It is recommended to open up more artistic leadership roles (stage direction, playwriting etc.) to women and members of minority groups. The ETC code of conduct states "Reflect gender and diversity across artistic creation and programming; Invest in training allowing equal opportunities for gender and diversity minority groups; Ensure equal pay across gender." Theatres are advised to look at their HR structure and to question the work-life balance in the institution.

## **Analyse the diversity and equality of programmes**

- » The data on gender visibility in the ETC member theatres' programming are only partially representative and can be considered as a snapshot. Only eight countries were analysed on programme data – nearly half the shows were in Germany, and very little data came from France and Belgium.
- » Nevertheless, some important findings emerge. The world of theatre presented to the public remains "a rather masculine universe overall" since men represent 60% of those cited in the theatre programmes. This is a consequence of men being concentrated in the most visible professions (author, director, choreographer, plus the backstage technical roles), as well as taking a higher number of stage roles, compared to women. With power being concentrated in creation, the research states that men occupy "the most legitimate professions" in the theatres surveyed.
- » The results also showed that these inequalities were not present when a show was directed by women, in which case a gender balanced, closer to a 50-50 distribution of roles was observed. It is recommended that theatres launch a reflection on balance in programming, and consider whether to introduce a quota or target system.
- » An analysis of the institution's cultural outputs by using tools existing in the film and audio-visual industries such as the Bechdel test and F rating is also recommended.

## **Review your organisational policies**

- » The majority of the theatres who responded (c. 64%) have an organisational policy focusing on gender equality. However, about a third of the responding theatres reported being partially or totally forced to implement one. The ETC code of conduct states "Set forward clear objectives in our theatres' artistic and management plans." Organisation policies on gender equality rely on the commitment of the organisation to implement them fully, and review its policy on a regular basis.

## **Consider how well your organisation reflects diversity in society**

- » The study concludes that much must still be done to achieve a level of diversity that corresponds to that in European societies. It is recommended that theatre organisations look at representation and diversity of their board or advisory bodies, volunteers, workshop participants, audiences, for example, and think about how well this reflects the diversity of the context where they are located.



## Suggestions for policy makers, and funders at local and national levels

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### Ensure funding streams and policy address equality and diversity

- » Longitudinal studies of equality and diversity within cultural institutions, at national level, should be supported to ensure that this type of research becomes fully relevant and representative.
- » With most policy makers and funders having their own organisational policies on gender equality and diversity, it is suggested that they should lead on and support regular reviews of how their publicly funded theatres are implementing such policies.
- » Support the recruitment and employment of diversity officers in theatres/cultural institutions.
- » Review the selection / nomination processes for artistic leaders in publicly-funded theatres: does the result reflect your society and local context?
- » Support networking, training and mentorship opportunities for entry- and mid-level theatre-makers, especially women and representatives of minority groups.
- » The Voices of Culture report on 'Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors' provides important

additional inputs on the subject. The report presents the results of a brainstorming among participants representing the cultural sectors from the EU Member States, and was presented to the European Commission in November 2019.



## Suggestions for EU level

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### Support

- » Longitudinal studies of equality and diversity within cultural institutions across Europe should be supported to ensure that this type of research becomes fully relevant and representative. The methodological tools developed for the ETC research can be publicly shared for wider dissemination and adaptation across cultural institutions.
- » Support the research and publication of a catalogue of good practices, to inspire programming initiatives across Europe.
- » The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated some existing inequalities in workplaces in Europe and the cultural sector is also seeing the adverse impacts (e.g. workers on temporary or short-term contracts, who are more likely to be female, may have lost employment). Supporting mechanisms and programmes that focus specifically on improving diversity and gender equality in cultural institutions would be beneficial.
- » Take into account the Voices of Culture report on 'Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors' mentioned above.



## Conclusion

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**In general, funding and support schemes at European, national and regional levels should take into consideration that interdisciplinary and international research need a long-term approach.**

ETC's goal is to show that European initiatives – both on the political and artistic levels – fuel changes among the individuals and professionals involved, as well as at national level. Such European initiatives reinforce a European dimension, and reach wider groups of citizens in the process. It is therefore essential to enable and support international collaboration and the exchange of work practices. Continued and expanded international cooperation is necessary to create theatre for the future.

ETC has committed itself to working in this direction while continuing to address the question of gender equality and diversity in theatre in its programmes and advocacy actions.

## More ETC Publications

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### ETC Journals

- ENGAGE – Designing the New Decade (2020/21)
- ENGAGE – Europe on Stage (2019/20)
- ENGAGE – International Programme for European Theatres (2018/19)
- ENGAGE – Empowering Today’s Audiences Through Challenging Theatre (2017/18)

### Casebooks

- Youth Theatre – A Casebook (2020)
- Participatory Theatre – A Casebook (2020)
- Digital Theatre – A Casebook (2018)

### Policy Papers

- Gender Equality & Diversity in Theatre (2021)
- Youth Theatre (2021)
- Participatory Theatre (2021)
- Drama goes digital vs. Theatre invades digital (2018)

### Research

- Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres – A Study (2021)
- The Art of Ageing – Bringing the Burning Issue of Global Demographic Change on Europe’s Stages. Creative Research – a Documentary by the European Theatre Convention (2015)
- Audiences for European Theatres. Study on Audience Development and Research in the ETC (2015)

### European Drama

- Theatre is Dialogue – Awakening. New Horizons in the Independent Theatre Scene in Ukraine (2017)
- Young Europe – European Drama Repertoire for Young Audiences. A Selection of Five Plays From Cyprus, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Theater der Zeit (2013)

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