

European Cultural Agitators Network (ECAN)

Vocational Training Programme and Exchange Network for the Cultural Sector

Kulturplattform Oberösterreich (Austria)

Bayerischer Landesverband Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft (Germany)

Trànsit Projectes (Spain)





The central objective of ECAN is to professionalise ^{the} vocational training of cultural agitators, to better adapt it to the needs of the target group and to take a step towards standardising the job profile in Europe. ECAN wants to improve the training opportunities, the skill set and thus also the social and economic situation of cultural agitators in Europe and to establish a transnational network of cultural agitators open to innovation and transformation.

ECAN was developed as part of an international project co-financed by the European Union by a consortium consisting of the NGOs Kulturplattform Oberösterreich (KUPF OÖ) based in Linz/Austria, Bayerischer Landesverband der Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft e.V. (BLVKK) based in Munich/Germany and Trànsit Projectes based in Barcelona/Spain. It is rooted in a comprehensive analysis of existing vocational training programmes and the needs of cultural agitators from different professional fields and geographical regions. To this end, at least five expert interviews and a systematic analysis of the existing qualification ~~programs~~ were conducted in each of the three participating countries. The developers of the programme have themselves been closely involved in the cultural scene for many years and have extensive experience in the field of vocational training. Therefore, ECAN offers a high-quality ~~professional development~~ programme directly rooted in the cultural field.



The European Cultural Agitators Network ECAN is a vocational training programme and exchange network for people working in the cultural field. It aims to enhance transnational exchange and support cultural agitators in finding answers that can help them deal with current transformations in European societies. These transformations are initiated by developments such as the rise of political populism, the looming climate crisis, growing international mobility, the emergence of armed conflicts, ongoing digitisation, or the increase of social exclusion. In the programme, participants will learn about the transformations in European societies and develop strategies on how to deal with their effects in their work. Moreover, participants will acquire tools to face contemporary challenges and impact current transformations through their activities.

ECAN is aimed at a global community ^{of} cultural agitators living in Europe willing to create a network to exchange ideas, processes, knowledge, and strategies to enhance a more sustainable, resilient, connected, and interdependent region. The organisers encourage people with an interest in innovation and in the transformation of contemporary culture to participate.



WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT ECAN?

What mainly distinguishes ECAN from existing programmes is its

Informal learning environment:

ECAN builds on expert cultural managers as learning facilitators and mentors. Instead of presenting abstract textbook knowledge, they tell participants their stories of success and failure (“experience-oriented knowledge transfer”). Accordingly, so-called “soft skills” such as active and empathetic listening, communication, etc. are considered particularly important and are practiced intensively in the programme. Additionally, participants acquire practical knowledge, skills, and competencies directly from the exchange with their colleagues. “Horizontal knowledge transfer” between participants plays an important role here.

Transnational and transversal perspective:

ECAN is the only programme in the field to offer both regional and national as well as European perspectives and is aimed at people from a wide range of cultural fields. Transnationality plays a role both on the content level (migration, climate crisis, communication, European values as topics of cultural work) and on the structural level (exchange, networks, and cooperation beyond European borders). Transversality also plays a role, as the participants come from different sectors and content is relevant across these sectors.

Europewide cultural network:

As alumni, the participants and their institutions become part of a European network of cultural creators who support each other and seek new forms of collaboration. They will thus become ambassadors of a cross-border European culture characterized by solidarity, innovation, and the will to actively shape the future. The network is designed for sustainability in a multi-layered sense (ecological, social, etc.).

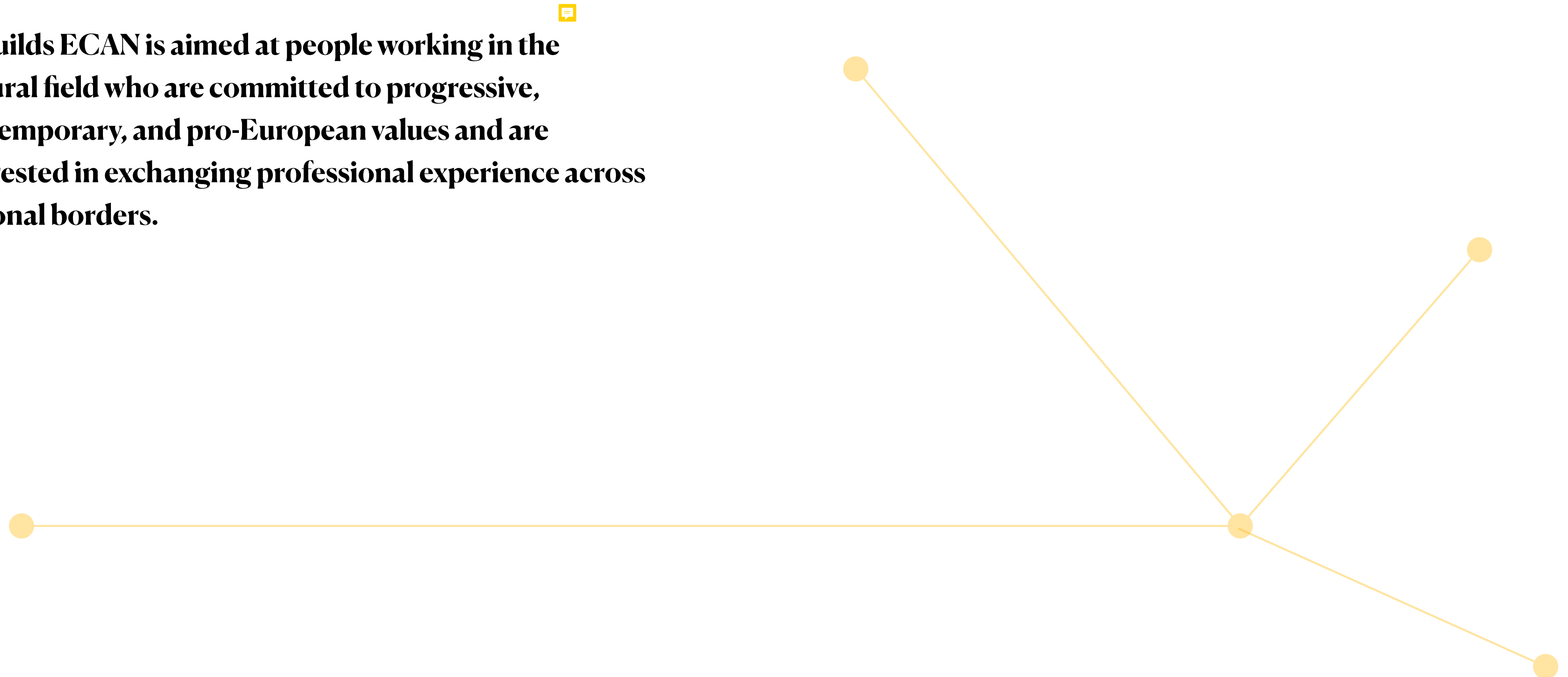
Focus on the social aspects of culture:

Cultural offerings ~~in both urban and rural areas~~ are aimed at local communities and neighbourhoods. They intend to engage them as audiences and participants in their activities. Therefore ~~these~~ cultural institutions and organisations fulfil an essential social function. To do so properly, an understanding of the different opportunities for cultural participation along complexly structured social dividing lines is necessary. In the ECAN programme these lines are described and taught from an intersectional perspective to make them applicable and effective in practice.

WHO IS ECAN FOR?

Target groups and admission requirements

ECAN builds ECAN is aimed at people working in the cultural field who are committed to progressive, contemporary, and pro-European values and are interested in exchanging professional experience across national borders.





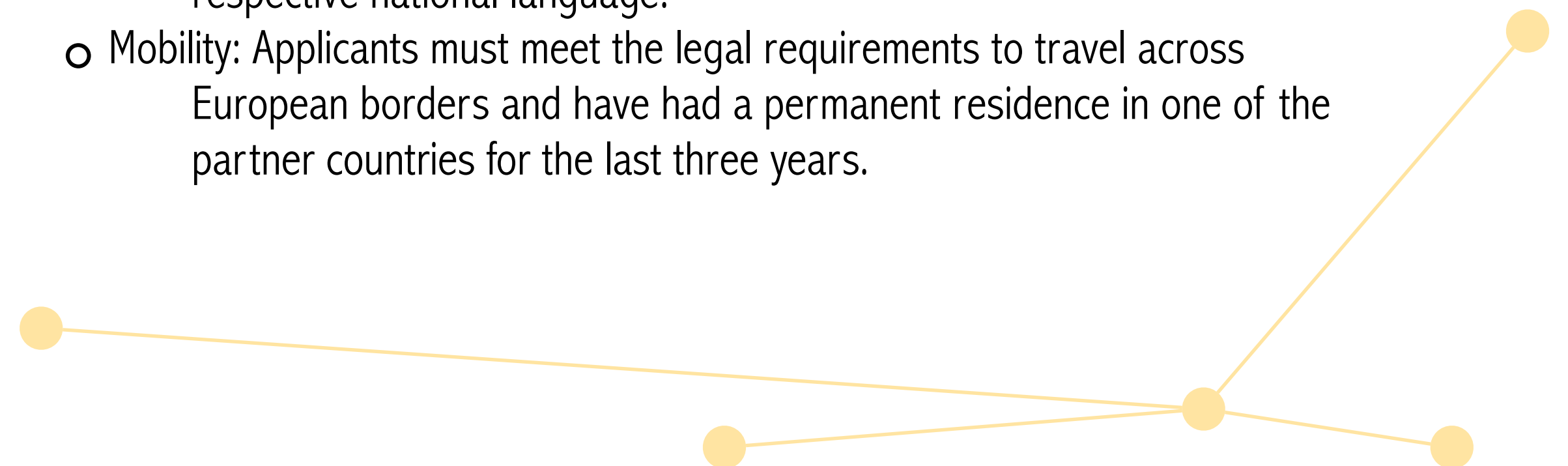
Potential participants:

- are committed to innovations in the cultural field and work to change it in a socially and ecologically sustainable way
- recognize the opportunities and potential of digitisation and try to make these effective for the cultural sector
- have a broad concept of culture that places “high culture” on an equal footing with grassroots and socio-culture
- recognize that cultural venues are always educational venues where visitors have multiple ~~educational~~ experiences.
- understand culture as an act of creative confrontation with the world (and not exclusively as a receptive experience via concerts, performances, etc.), through which social developments can be discussed and contextualized
- regard culture as a central factor in community building and in the constructive development and preservation of democracy in Europe

The curriculum is inclusive and diverse. It recognizes the multiple forms of exclusion in European societies and therefore explicitly invites people who have experienced marginalisation due to race, class, gender, age, or ability to participate.

As the basic requirements for participation in ECAN are:

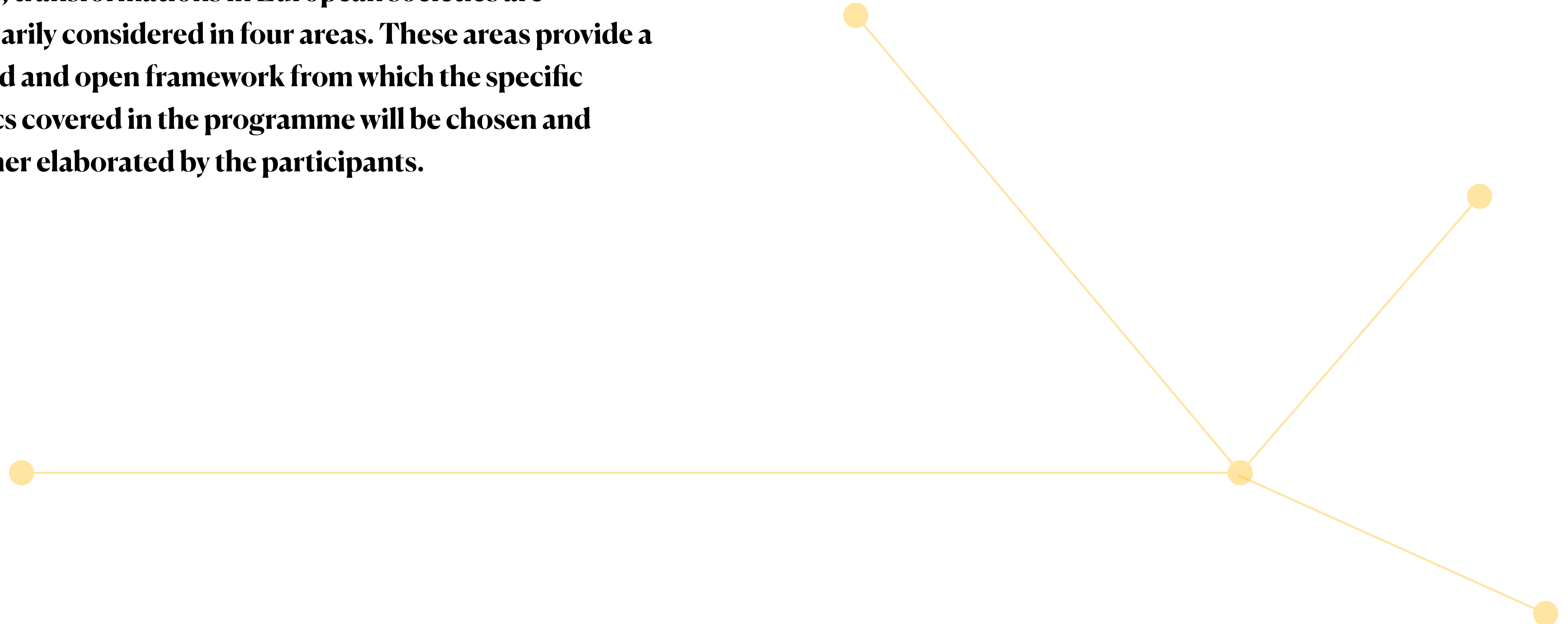
- Age: For legal reasons and to ensure the necessary freedom of movement across Europe potential participants must be at least 21 years old.
- Prior experience: Applicants must have at least three years of practical experience (whether in an institution, as a freelancer, or voluntarily) and/or finished their basic education (Cultural management, BSc or higher) as a cultural agitator. People with more professional experience or career changers are also expressly invited to apply.
- Open-mindedness: Applicants must identify with the values of the curriculum (inclusive in a broad sense, democratic, pro-European, and progressive). A written letter of motivation covering the ~~applicant's~~ expectations and wishes regarding the programme is required.
- Language skills: A confident command of English, at least language level B1, and the willingness to communicate in English are necessary to attend the programme. In the local groups, communication can take place in the respective national language.
- Mobility: Applicants must meet the legal requirements to travel across European borders and have had a permanent residence in one of the partner countries for the last three years.



WHAT IS ECAN ABOUT?

Content framework

In ECAN, transformations in European societies are primarily considered in four areas. These areas provide a broad and open framework from which the specific topics covered in the programme will be chosen and further elaborated by the participants.





1. CONNECTIONS

In their everyday lives, cultural agitators often deal with the question: How can we build sound, lasting, meaningful connections with our environment, and also facilitate the creation of connections between the people and institutions that constitute that environment? Particularly due to increasing communication channels, growing mobility, and, last but not least, the COVID pandemic, both the form of establishing connections and the environment in which these connections take place have changed significantly in recent years.

In the cultural sector, connections primarily concern an organisations' internal (team, volunteers, freelancers) and external (sponsors & funding institutions, visitors & neighbourhoods, artists & creators) communication. This includes aspects of team building and leadership as well as marketing, booking, audience development, and mediation activities.

In ECAN, facilitators and participants talk and learn about successful and failed efforts to reach new target groups, design contemporary cultural offers, explore alternative forms of financing, implement successful advertising measures, create functioning human resources management, transfer knowledge after management changes, and much more.

2. PASSAGES

Another challenge for cultural agitators is dealing with changes that arise due to temporal or geographical passages. Two macro trends that have become increasingly clear in recent years are particularly relevant in this area: the ongoing internal dissolution and external consolidation of Europe's borders as well as the increasing digitisation of numerous areas of life including the emergence of artificial intelligence.

Both trends affect the cultural sector in many ways, be it regarding content (digitisation/AI and mobility/migration as a topic) or formal design (digital or transnational formats, new distribution channels) of the program, be it in the organisation of everyday work (digitisation affects all organisational aspects of office work; refugees or immigrants as artists, audiences, volunteers or workers).

In ECAN, facilitators and participants will report on and learn about various paradigmatic attempts to incorporate these macro trends programmatically and organisationally. They will also provide assessments of how these trends will manifest themselves in the future and what further changes and challenges cultural agitators will have to expect.

3. IDENTITIES

Cultural organisations want to reach as wide an audience as possible in their work. This requires an understanding of how the society that surrounds them is organised. European societies have changed considerably in the recent past. Among other things, the axes of social differentiation have shifted. With the success of welfare state programmes, other factors such as gender, ethnicity, ability, and age have become visible as structural factors of inequality and exclusion alongside the class factor. An intersectional perspective is therefore necessary for cultural agitators to understand and broaden their target group.

ECAN will create a diverse group of potential European Cultural Agitators that truly reflects the reality and ongoing development of an evermore complex and differentiated European society. Still today, many cultural institutions in Europe are led by privileged male, white, well-off executive teams which gear their programmes to a corresponding audience. We see a huge opportunity to enrich the field of cultural work through more diverse actors. The program strives to empower these actors in the long term through the transnational alumni network. ECAN, therefore, invites facilitators and participants from organisations that have more or less successfully implemented projects and programmes focusing on queer art, migrant perspectives, artists with disabilities, and the connections between them.



4. EXISTENCE

The current transformations in European societies represent a challenge in terms of individual and societal well-being. Three essential aspects that affect the cultural area are mental health, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, crisis-related developments with global repercussions, not only have increasingly affected mental health but also have a great incidence on the growth of poverty, and social exclusion. Anxiety, depression, psychological overload, burnout, isolation, and marginalisation are at the core of the contemporary problems. Moreover, cultural agitators have to consider what contribution they can make to curbing harmful greenhouse gases, in order to take responsibility in the climate emergency the world is facing.

In ECAN, facilitators and participants will talk and learn about how to respond to the existential challenges of our time and more or less successful experiences on the topics of supervision and health programs for employees, activities that enable people on low incomes to visit cultural and arts centers, the organisation of so-called “green events” and the decarbonisation of cultural businesses.

WHAT DOES ECAN TEACH?

Learning objectives and completion



As a vocational training programme, ECAN already presupposes a range of knowledge and skills. These include basic skills in the areas of project management, accounting, law, marketing, and team leadership, which participants have already learned in their basic training or during their professional careers.



After completing ECAN, participants are intended to:

- be able to define, explain, and relate current transformations in European societies and the challenges associated with these transformations,
- know what influence cultural organisations and institutions can have on these changes,
- be able to implement this knowledge of current transformations in European societies both in their programme design and in their organisational activities,
- be able to formulate applications for funding accordingly,
- be able to pass on the knowledge acquired in the programme within their local cultural networks,
- have access to a network of national and European partners, benefit from their knowledge and experience, and be able to work with them for further cooperation,
- have acquired self-confidence and resilience in dealing with ongoing crises.

WHAT IS THE ECAN PROCESS?

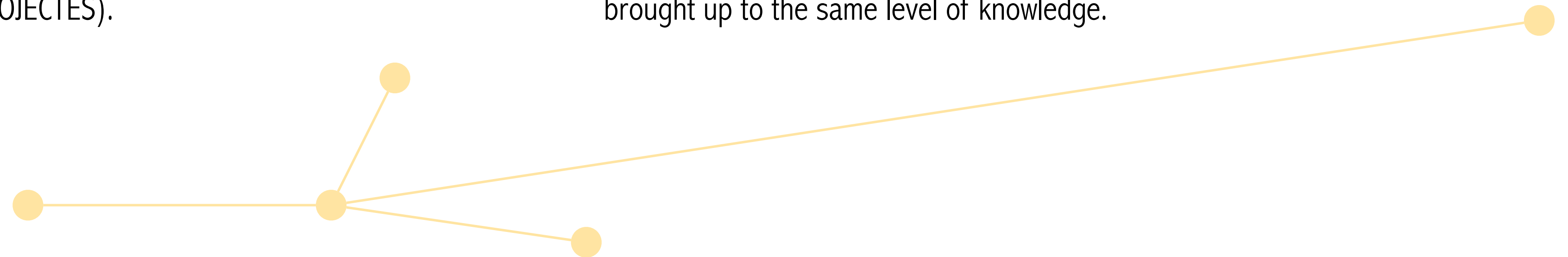
Structure of the program

The ECAN programme is divided into two levels:

- On a regional level, local cultural agitators will be connected and the most important course content will be elaborated. Sessions on the regional level will be organised by the participants themselves and hosted by organisations in local cultural institutions. The regions involved in the programme are Upper Austria (KUPF OÖ), Bavaria (BLVKK), and Catalonia (TRANSIT PROJECTES).
- On a transnational level, exchange with cultural agitators from other European countries will be facilitated and the contents learned in the regional sessions will be tested for their international applicability. Sessions on the transnational level will be held both virtually and on-site. The on-site sessions will be hosted and organised collaboratively by the consortium of KUPF OÖ, BLVKK, and (TRANSIT PROJECTES).

The ECAN programme consists of six modules:

- The main content is taught in four thematic modules, each lasting two months. The guiding thematic framework for the modules is provided by the topics Connections, Passages, Identities, and Existence as mentioned above. Each module consists of four local on-site sessions and one transnational virtual session.
- In addition, an opening and a closing module are offered. These each consist of a transnational and a regional on-site session, in which a safe space for communication and exchange of a diverse group of people will be created. The opening and closing modules serve to network the participants and frame the programme. Basic information about the further course of the programme is shared and all participants are brought up to the same level of knowledge.



WHAT IS THE **ECAN** PROCESS?

Structure of the ~~program~~

Duration: 12 months


Workload: 140 hours

~~4 thematic modules x 5 sessions = 20 sessions x 5 hours (avg)
= 100 hours~~

~~2 transnational and 2 regional opening/closing sessions x 10 hours
= 40 hours~~

Sessions: On Weekends (Friday afternoon, Saturday) every two weeks

Settings: Each partner organisation will serve as a node of the learning platform and will provide the infrastructure to develop the program in its city or region.

Month 1-2	Month 3-4	Month 5-6	Month 7-8	Month 9-10	Month 11-12
Mod 1 Opening Module	Mod 2 Thematic Module	Mod 3 Thematic Module	Mod 4 Thematic Module	Mod 5 Thematic Module	Mod 6 Closing Module
1 regional on-site session	4 regional on-site session 	4 regional on-site session	4 regional on-site session	4 regional on-site session	1 regional on-site session
1 transnational on-site session	1 transnational virtual session	1 transnational virtual session	1 transnational virtual session	1 transnational virtual session	1 transnational on-site session

HOW DO ECAN PARTICIPANTS LEARN?

Remarks on methodology

The learning methodology of ECAN is based on notions of solidarity and mutual support, de-hierarchisation, de-centralisation, de-localisation, and disobedience, creating joint alternatives to the hegemonic and normative knowledge system. As a practice-oriented programme, ECAN aims to be structured bottom-up rather than top-down. The programme proposes a self-organized curriculum through commons-based methods and practices. The thematic framework defines four subject areas (connections, passages, identities, and existence) to get inspired. However, specific content will be defined by the learning community (i.e. the participants), and investigations will be carried out as peer-to-peer collaborative tasks. Methodologically, ECAN aims to promote a transdisciplinary understanding of knowledge, focusing on the contemporary topics believed to be shaping today's world as mentioned above.

Content is mainly elaborated in the (regional & transnational/virtual & on-site) sessions. Participants will be encouraged to actively shape the structure and contents either by organising and hosting sessions themselves or by inviting speakers and tutors who are relevant to their research theme. Each session can take the shape of a seminar or master class, a debate, a visit to a place, a cooking together, an itinerary, or an activity. The programme staff and learning facilitators will support and help organise the educational program, mentoring and providing help when needed, especially by being flexible, agile, and adapting to each will and possibility, open to the needs and interests of the participants.

Every session will have a different space and will happen in a different environment and/or in the partner institution centres. The notion of the classroom will be disrupted and different public and private places such as schools, cultural venues, community centres or kitchens, parks, and temporary places can host the participants.

The process and outcome of the programme will be shared via an open platform and throughout different activities around Europe. Along with the annual program, a broad alumni network that continuously shapes and enriches the curriculum with their contributions shall be created.

With this programme and network platform, the consortium aims to establish a community of cultural agitators in which sharing, mutual support, empathetic listening, peer learning, and an inclusive and comfortable environment are at the core of the program. ECAN wants participants to be empowered as agents of change, by putting their capacities at the centre and valuing each other's presence and voice as necessary.



CERTIFICATION

Upon completion, participants receive a certificate and access to the alumni network. As no suitable certification process yet exists at the European level and to offer participants the highest possible added value, a certificate is offered at the national level of the partner countries. The aim is to work with suitable national training partners to ensure appropriate recognition on the labour market and access to corresponding funding measures.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

A total of 30 participants are selected for the curriculum per round. For each partner country, 8 - 10 people are selected to ensure viable local groups.

Applications are to be submitted to the national partner organisations via a binding online checklist (admission requirements) and with a written letter of motivation including CV. There, the screening and initial selection process is carried out by the team of the national partner organisation to conduct interviews (in person or online) in English with the most promising candidates.

After the interview phase, a committee from all partner organisations finalises the selection in a joint online meeting. External experts from the pool of facilitators or specialist cultural organisations and civil society representatives of marginalised groups may also be involved within the framework of an advisory board. In addition, graduates will be involved in the final selection process from the second cycle onwards.

COSTS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

With a duration of 12 months, the costs for participants amount to €150 per month. To increase commitment, participants also pay a one-off registration fee of €200 after the selection process has been completed. This results in total costs of €2,000 per participant.

Through cooperation with national educational partners, the curriculum is to be made eligible for funding through country-specific educational support programs.

In line with the diverse and inclusive orientation, a low-threshold scholarship program is planned to enable participants without sufficient financial resources to gain access.

The remaining costs are financed by public funding, foundations and donations. A solidarity principle is also planned, whereby wealthy participants can support less wealthy colleagues without a power imbalance.

