



Hearing Response: Project Document – “ARCH - The Fund for African - Danish Relations through Mutual Exchange of Culture and the Arts (2025-2028)”

Submitted by: Danish Cultural Institute

Introduction

Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) welcomes the Danish government's initiative to establish the Fund for African - Danish Relations through Mutual Exchange of Culture and the Arts (2025-2028), abbreviated ARCH.

By giving culture and the arts a prominent place, the government demonstrates that it recognises the profound power of culture to connect people, fosters shared understanding, and inspires local action. This is not only forward-thinking but essential. Art and culture are much more than entertainment or personal enrichment — they shape our identity and worldview and build trust while laying the foundations for societal progress.

At a time when misinformation and propaganda prevail, art and culture stand as vital forces in cultivating critical thinking and sound judgement. It is through our encounters with literature, film, visual art, music, the performing arts, design, games etc., that we learn to see beyond our own experiences and grasp the complexities of human stories. By doing so, we become less vulnerable to manipulation and more capable of recognizing misleading narratives and lies.

Furthermore, culture and arts, are the foundation for creative business and industries in Africa, which as pointed out in ARCH is growing, and may provide significant job creation and income earning opportunities for African youth.

Moreover, cultural collaboration between Denmark and African countries fosters enduring connections and relationships, sustained by shared experiences, mutual trust, and deep respect. These are a solid foundation for building sustainability, community, resilience, cohesion, and understanding across borders and communities.

Recommendations:

1. Cultural Rights Based Approach

DCI has particularly noticed the alignment of the project draft with HRBA, LNOB, gender and youth, climate change and environmental considerations is clear. We would like to highlight though that HRBA also includes the Cultural Rights Based Approach, which generally is relevant to arts and culture actors. We recommend that the Cultural Rights Based Approach is specifically mentioned and explicitly described in the final project document.



2. EU - African cultural network: European Union National Institutes for Culture

DCI would like to complement the thorough groundwork carried out, including interviews with a wide range of relevant stakeholders both in Denmark and across Africa. This provides a strong foundation for designing the rationale of the Fund. We recommend, however, widening the number of stakeholders involved. We want to point to EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture). Denmark is represented in EUNIC through Danish Cultural Institute. EUNIC is the European network of national institutes of culture in all EU member states dedicated to fostering cultural relations and present in over 100 countries worldwide. EUNIC members cover all EU Member States and its Associate members. Examples of full members, apart from Danish Cultural Institute, are Goethe Institute, Institute Francais/Alliance Francais, Italian Cultural Institute, Cervantes Institute, Camoes Institute, Dutch Culture, Swedish Institute. Associate members include British Council and Ukraine Institute.

Furthermore, EUNIC has established a network of 140 EUNIC clusters each consisting of individual EUNIC members in all parts of the world, incl. particularly Africa. EUNIC has a particular strategic importance for the Danish engagement in Africa, due to its anchoring in the “EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action”, adopted by the Council in 2019, and is since developed further in partnership with the EU. EUNIC – incl. Danish Cultural Institute - bases its work on elaborated principles of “Fair Collaboration”.

In Africa, EUNIC also plays a significant role in mutual international cultural relations and exchange. Individual EUNIC members are present in most African countries, or via its formalised African EUNIC clusters in 22 African countries, overlapping the ARCH countries. Danish Cultural Institute has contact with most EUNIC members present in Africa as well as to several of the EUNIC Clusters in Africa. Danish Cultural Institute has also previously agreed with the Danish Embassy in Egypt to represent Danish Cultural Institute in the local EUNIC Cluster in Egypt.

Danish Cultural Institute will be happy to connect the drafting team with relevant contacts within the network. From our perspective, EUNIC could provide valuable expertise in shaping the project framework and serve as a key partner throughout its implementation.

3. More active role for the Danish cultural sector

DCI welcomes the concept of equal partnerships in the project document. For the Danish cultural sector, this is particularly important since there is a growing and deeply rooted understanding of the role that culture, arts and dialogue can play in building friendship, hope, and strong alliances across borders. Danish cultural life has long been characterised by openness, participation, and collaboration — and today, these values are being further developed into professional peer-to-peer collaborations that reaches beyond traditional intercultural exchange.

There is also a growing awareness that genuine collaboration begins with listening. In this spirit, we – as member of the Danish cultural sector - welcome and support international frameworks that give local voices a central role, ensuring that projects respond to local needs and ambitions.



About Danish Cultural Institute

At its heart, Danish Cultural Institute's mission is to foster mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence by building trust and dialogue through cultural and artistic exchange. This aligns with the Institute's founding vision, established in 1940 at the beginning of the second world war by Folmer Visti and a group of prominent Danes from the fields of art, culture, science, and society. They were convinced that the mutual exchange of culture and arts were essential counteractions to the rising authoritarianism and war in Europe at the time. Since then, Danish Cultural Institute has played an active role in artistic and socio-cultural collaboration between Denmark and countries at the centre of geopolitical attention. Building on Denmark's strong traditions of dialogue and participation, Danish Cultural Institute collaborates with partners abroad and in Denmark on projects that demonstrate how art and culture, in conjunction with other sectors, can promote cross-border cooperation, equal partnerships, and socio-economic change, alongside with green and just transition.