# AiR Cross Border NL-DE – Results and Outlook meeting November 2025

*Foto: c Jan Lemnitz*

In 2025, DutchCulture|TransArtists and IGBK, together with a consortium of regional partners, organized a two-day meeting for residency operators, artists, and art organizers to share transregional contexts and interests in cross-border cultural cooperation. The gathering also included a field trip in cooperation with the Borderland Residencies program and a joint panel at the Reading the Region conference at Kunsthaus NRW in Kornelimünster, hosted by the trinational network Very Contemporary.

The work-related mobility of artists and the welcoming culture of artist-in-residence (AIR) programs contribute significantly to cultural and social cohesion between countries and regions, which is central to European integration. Many of these programs and initiatives in border regions are located in rural areas, offering space and time for research, community engagement, and the production of new work. They also function as platforms for presentation and cross-border exchange through open studios, exhibitions, workshops, and talks, fostering professional and civic interaction.

In light of recent EU developments, central questions addressed the artistic and political implications of borders, the understanding of thresholds as transitional spaces, and how artists respond to (new) cultural borders in practice. The meeting in the Euregio Maas-Rhein highlighted the importance and tradition of the EU's so-called Euregios—voluntary cross-border cooperation regions that began between Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium in the 1950s. Today, hundreds of similar "laboratories of European integration" exist across Europe.

Negotiations on the EU's 2028–2034 multiannual financial framework are currently underway, with potentially substantial adjustments to the Culture strand of Creative Europe, as well as developments in cohesion policy and Interreg affecting thematic priorities and national and regional planning frameworks.

With this event and documentation, DutchCulture|TransArtists and IGBK aim to strengthen interregional and cross-border cultural cooperation in Europe. Artist-in-residence programs and cultural cooperation, particularly in rural and interregional contexts, are key to sustaining European integration at a time when it is more important than ever. Find more information on the event at Dutch Culture|Transartists and IGBK.

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**The following aspects of cross-border cultural cooperation in border regions in particular were highlighted at the event in November 2025:**

• Residency programs and cultural cooperation across borders provide artists and communities with opportunities to experiment, reflect on, and engage with the particular social and political dynamics of border regions, turning "peripheral" settings into creative landscapes.
• Local cross-border exchange benefits from direct interaction and shared everyday practices, which is important for creating networks and a common understanding. In many European border regions, the local is the international, with no transnational directive necessary from the center.
• Borders are not only barriers; they enable opportunities as threshold spaces. Art speaks through the senses and becomes particularly relevant when it challenges social routines. Artists, residency programs and cultural workers are substantial stakeholders in this particular setting.
• Asymmetric administrative structures exist between neighbouring countries, also within the EU, which makes cross-border cooperation difficult for cultural practitioners. Furthermore, infrastructure plays an important role in cross-border cooperation, because the regions in question are often characterised as rural. That means, an adequate transport infrastructure, a functioning data network, free formal and informal education offerings and basic cultural services.
• Specifically, the diverse structure of the so-called "Euregios" requires flexibility for cross-border cultural cooperation to accommodate different expectations, needs, and working methods, and to foster European integration.

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**EU frameworks play a key role in cross-border cooperation among artists. We aim to inform cultural stakeholders and outline practical conditions for effective collaboration. The following aspects are particularly relevant:**

- Cross-border collaborations can benefit from EU funding opportunities, such as Creative Europe, Culture Moves Europe, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and in some cases Interreg A (including the Small Project Fund), providing support for joint projects and initiatives across borders.
- At the same time, differences in national funding and administrative structures can limit cross-border exchange; restrictions such as eligibility based on citizenship or complex application procedures create barriers for participating artists and organizations.
- For the art and cultural sector, the importance of EU Cohesion Policy and European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg), as well as the opportunities for promoting cross-border and regional cooperation in the context of the ERDF and ESF Structural Funds, cannot be overestimated. This potential, for instance in the preparation of programs in socially and regionally engaged arts, in qualification for funding applications or public relations work, is often not sufficiently exploited or publicized.
- As part of the European Commission's proposals for the EU's 2028–2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF), the introduction of (new) National and Regional Partnership Plans has prompted questions and concerns at regional level regarding how regions will be involved in future programming and implementation processes. Strategic responsibilities are expected to be more strongly anchored at Member State level, with potential implications for cross-border cooperation structures and long-established Euregios; at the same time, European Territorial Cooperation programs (Interreg) are foreseen to remain outside this framework and continue under a dedicated governance and programming structure.
- In the context of the next EU MFF, earmarking a fixed share of national and regional structural and cohesion funds for culture (e.g. 2%) can strengthen cross-border cultural cooperation, combined with principles such as artistic freedom, fair pay, geographic balance, and support for small and independent actors.
- A strengthened and clearly ring-fenced Culture strand within a future AgoraEU programme—including transparent funding lines and simplified access for small-scale initiatives (e.g. through micro-grant fast tracks for first-time applicants and emerging artists)—would improve planning security, visibility and fair working conditions for artists and cultural organisations.
- The mobility of artists, especially in border regions, benefits from supportive measures, such as:
  - Practical guidance and advice services for the cultural and creative sector that help make project implementation more effective and reduce barriers by informing about social security, taxation and visa issues, particularly when cooperating with non-EU partners. The Mobility Info Points (within On The Move network) provide exactly this information and advice.
  - Continuation of the Culture Moves Europe programme and other EU initiatives providing financial support for short-term mobility,
  - Adequate remuneration for participating artists and cultural practicioners to enable sustainable cross-border collaboration.

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**Background**

DutchCulture|TransArtists is part of DutchCulture, and serves as an international platform for information on artist-in-residence opportunities worldwide. In addition to the comprehensive online database, TransArtists supports the position of AiR organisations in the Netherlands through the AiR NL network. It fosters professional exchange and collaboration by organizing symposia, meetings, and other knowledge-sharing formats, connecting the Dutch AiR field with international developments.

The Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK) is an umbrella organization for visual artists in Germany on the national and international level. It acts as a network and information hub, supporting mobility, exchange, and better working conditions in visual arts. IGBK also promotes discourse on current cultural policy issues and facilitates international collaboration, including in the context of artist-in-residence initiatives.