

Call to Action

Julie's Bicycle calls on governments to address the gap between culture and environment policy

An evidence-based plea for COP26 to account for arts and culture



Julie's Bicycle urges governments to support culture to take action on the climate emergency: culture is the missing link.

As the world's governments negotiate policy to effectively limit climate change, there is a crucial gap: culture policy.

The cultural sector – the arts, creative industries and heritage – can make a crucial contribution to accelerating environmental action. Culture is vital to national economies, bringing creative skills and innovation, and influencing lifestyles, tastes and consumption. The cultural sector contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and must play its part by aligning with carbon-cutting targets. But, most powerfully, culture can change hearts and minds: it is intimately connected to place and to community; artists can move us to reimagine our world and inspire societies to take climate action.

Artists, creative activists, cultural organisations and creative enterprises around the world are championing action on climate and justice and calling for change.

But to have optimal impact, national culture policy needs to be linked to environment policy, harnessing the vital energy of the culture sector to mainstream climate action.

Culture policy sets the terms on which governments organise, fund and promote bodies responsible for arts and culture – bodies that represent artists, cultural organisations, and audiences that join together in making and sharing experiences that transform our world.

In its recent international research, Julie's Bicycle finds that in most countries, national culture policy currently lags behind the initiatives within the sector – and the science.

Government culture bodies across the world report that there is currently little or no mandate to ensure that their culture sectors are aligned with national climate commitments. Such a mandate would unlock the resources to enable the sector to align with national climate policies and it would unleash the true potential of the culture sector to inspire climate action.

Based on 15 years' experience, data, and research enriched by its most recent piece of international work, Julie's Bicycle now calls on governments to integrate culture into their climate commitments. Arts and culture can then become a key part of the solution: the missing link. Here is how:

- 01** In consultation with the culture sector, create policy that includes a statutory framework and pathways for the sector to help keep global temperatures below 1.5C, including:
 - **Hardware:** Buildings, infrastructure, materials, physical operations of the culture sector: in arts venues, festivals, events, products, transportation
 - **Software:** skills and knowledge-sharing, fair access to information, dedicated support for innovation, cross-sector collaboration, international exchange
 - **A just and fair cultural transition:** ensuring that the transition is fair and inclusive, particularly addressing the disparities in cultural resourcing and access, globally and nationally.
- 02** Harness the power of culture to address the environmental emergency by ensuring the culture sector is represented in national policy-making in response to the climate crisis. Governments need to engage in dialogue and draw on the expertise, as well as the creativity, of arts and culture, and recognise the sector's ambition to contribute.
- 03** Establish arts and culture as an integrating thread in environmental transformation. Culture should have an integral role in planning for adaptation & mitigation, preservation of nature, and especially within environmental justice which reads directly across to many policy priorities already established (i.e. cultural rights, freedom of expression, inclusion).
- 04** Recognise and draw upon the creativity that is thriving at the local level, where community initiatives offer endless ideas and testing grounds for effective climate action. With the culture sector at the table, policy-making can be collaborative, participatory and co-created with communities.
- 05** Enable international dialogue that supports an open and equal exchange between culture leaders across countries and continents, sharing strategies and policies to address climate change.



There is no time to lose; we must not miss this opportunity. Culture is the missing link.

About the research and Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle was founded 15 years ago as a non-governmental organisation to mobilise arts and culture to act on the climate and ecological crisis.

For COP21 in 2015, Julie's Bicycle rallied more than 300 recognised artists and cultural leaders from around the world to assure ministers that the creative community was behind them and to urge ambitious action.

For COP26 in 2021, the message is more pointed: ministers must use the policy tools at their disposal to fully harmonise arts and culture with environmental policy, planning and responsibility.

Julie's Bicycle has undertaken in-depth research to understand the contribution that arts and culture makes – and could make -- to environmental progress. Julie's

Bicycle recently conducted a survey funded by the British Council, with questionnaires and feedback from more than 50 countries, as well as interviews with arts leaders, and roundtable discussions with the culture community in Indonesia, Turkey, Colombia and Nigeria.

Overwhelmingly the responding arts and culture organisations converged on the need for the statutory authority which would unlock support and funding. The sector's multiple individual initiatives of the past will not make a meaningful difference; arts and culture leaders need the consolidated, supported, accountable approach to the environment that an environmentally aligned culture policy would underpin.

Julie's Bicycle joins with many in its wide international network to urge national governments to link climate and environment policy in a meaningful way that will contribute significantly to limiting climate change.



Julie's Bicycle

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