



Corporate
Sustainability
**in Support
of Culture**



Original in French
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CSSC Project

Corporate Sustainability Strategies in support of Culture

Mediation, monitoring, visibility, advocacy, and knowledge sharing to improve the contribution of the private sector in favor of artists and cultural and creative industries.

Final Report

Progress under Stratex | UP Cité funding June 2023 - May 2024

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The CSSC project

The [CSSC project](#) was selected in March 2023 by Université Paris Cité as part of STRATEX funding from the French government's Investments for the Future program, as a project with high potential for commercial value and social and economic impact.

It aims to encourage the inclusion of culture and cultural diversity in corporate sustainability strategies, by establishing a methodology for assessing the needs and actions of all stakeholders (companies, artists, associations, public authorities, etc.) based on the use of mediation techniques.

The project, which began on June 12, 2023, is led by [Lilian Richieri Hanania](#), lawyer, mediator, researcher and lecturer at Université Paris Cité, and [Anne-Thida Norodom](#), professor of public law at Université Paris Cité and deputy director of the Centre Maurice Hauriou for research in public law.

It also benefited from the contributions of our assistant [Aude Dumont](#), as well as four Paris Cité students enrolled in its Bachelor's in Information Technology program, [Yazid Maafa](#), [Séraphin Poirier](#), [Rayan Semaoune](#) and [Adrien Soleau](#), who developed a prototype platform based on the methodology created as part of the project.

Societal impact

Culture and cultural diversity play a fundamental role in the pursuit of human-centered sustainable development.

Cultural diversity, understood in its broadest sense, refers to "the **manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression**". It is a dynamic and evolving concept, based on transmission between and within groups, and which is made "manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through **diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment**, whatever the means and technologies used" (art. 4.1 of the [2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)).

Culture and cultural diversity are mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4.7, 8.9, 11.4 and 12.b established by the United Nations. International legal instruments such as the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions also recognize the cultural dimension of sustainable development. More recently, Mondiacult 2022 Conference acknowledged the "role of culture for sustainable development, peace and stability, as a force for resilience, social inclusion and cohesion, environmental protection and sustainable and inclusive growth, and fostering a human-centred and context-specific development, which supports the foundations of multicultural human societies (...)" ([Final](#)



[Declaration](#) of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022, §3.)

Numerous reports and practical examples underline the strong societal impact of taking culture and cultural diversity into account¹. The latter:

- contribute to the emotional and mental health of individuals and communities ([WHO Regional Office for Europe 2019](#)) and make them more resilient in times of crisis and accelerated change, which was noted during the COVID-19 crisis ([Council of Europe 2021](#));
- help build peaceful multicultural societies by promoting "intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding (...) and cooperation" (e.g. [Culture for Peace](#) project);
- raise awareness of environmental protection and help educate the public by making complex concepts more accessible and by encouraging virtuous practices as well as changes in behavior;
- benefit employees, companies and society as a whole: cultural diversity "promotes creativity, innovation, motivation, performance, productivity, employees' feeling of inclusion, mental and emotional health, professional fulfillment and commitment (...)"². Recognition of the impact of culture within companies is illustrated in their varied DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) policies.

As part of the CSSC project, we studied the experience of contributing to cultural diversity in a sample of 22 companies selected for their diversity of size, sector, and structure of contribution to cultural diversity (existence of a corporate foundation or not and priority areas for said foundation if applicable) and for the ease of identifying a contact person (within the network of CSSC project team members).³

Encouraging companies to strengthen cultural diversity within their organization (internal diversity)⁴ and in their relations with the outside world (external diversity)⁵, means fostering the dynamics that enable individuals to flourish, all players to prosper, and the human condition to improve.

¹ See L. Richieri Hanania and I. Kokinova, I. Kokinova "Public consultation on the first set of Draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards - Comments by culture Solutions", 20 June 2022, <https://www.culturesolutions.eu/publications/public-consultation-esrs/>.

² Ibid., p. 5.

³ See our [2023 Activity Report](#) for more details.

⁴ Examples of initiatives that promote **internal cultural diversity** in a company include: encouraging employee diversity and inclusion, efforts to reduce bias as to the origin of candidates when recruiting and evaluating companies, the application of existing diversity and inclusion standards (e.g. ISO), and the implementation of policies and mechanisms to promote intercultural understanding.

⁵ Examples of initiatives to promote a company's **external cultural diversity** include: providing spaces and facilities to increase the visibility of artistic work,



Methodology

The CSSC project focused on three types of stakeholders: companies, artists and public authorities. As part of the project, a methodology based on mediation techniques⁶ has been developed and will be continually refined, in order to:

- evaluate corporate actions in favor of cultural diversity,
- identify the needs of artists and the cultural and creative sectors,
- measure the impact of existing public policies and legal frameworks that encourage or require private-sector contributions to the various cultural sectors, and ultimately
- bring these three types of players together and encourage them to collaborate with each other.

Our assumption is that identifying the needs and levers for action of each of these players will facilitate their cooperation for mutual enrichment and greater effectiveness of public and private policies in favor of culture and cultural diversity.

Project Development

Phase 1: June - December 2023

Between June and December 2023, we focused on developing our methodology in three stages⁷:

1. *Data collection and analysis*: based on an analysis of companies' public reports on DEI and CSR, as well as interviews with a sample of companies, representatives of the cultural sector and local authorities, we drew up an inventory of initiatives promoting culture and cultural diversity.
2. *Development of a scoring grid* for the initiatives identified, based on a questionnaire drawn up in a format inspired by international reporting standards. The questionnaire aims to assess as many different initiatives as possible, both separately and cumulatively, and to propose categories of

financial or skills sponsorship, promoting local cultural communities, raising awareness of the role of art and artists in society, and promoting or facilitating access to culture.

⁶ The interviews were prepared using the Appreciative Inquiry method, successfully employed in project mediation, and the Principled Negotiation method, commonly used in general mediation (conflict, preventive and project mediation).

⁷ For a detailed presentation of the project phase 1 progress between June and December 2023, see our [2023 Activity Report](#).



initiatives that remain sufficiently broad to cover the varying and evolving efforts of companies.

3. *Drawing up specifications for the creation of the prototype CSSC Platform*, whose main functions is to:
 - enable companies to submit their data by answering the CSSC Questionnaire
 - score the data submitted to evaluate the initiatives undertaken
 - rank companies by size and sector according to their impact on culture and cultural diversity, with a view to later awarding a label accredited by a public institution or as part of a public-private partnership
 - produce individual rating and ranking reports for each company, which can be included in their CSR or DEI disclosures
 - based on an aggregated analysis of the data collected, enable the CSSC project team to draw up regular analysis reports for companies wishing to improve their performance, and for public authorities to better guide their policies and legislative frameworks
 - create a space for discussion and collaboration between companies to exchange best practices and tackle common challenges. A specific page is also dedicated to an inventory of the types of initiatives encountered and listed by the platform, with a focus on best practices identified according to the interest expressed by cultural sectors
 - connect cultural projects and companies wishing to make a greater commitment to local cultural life. Projects pre-selected by the municipalities registered on the platform, or by a committee made up of the CSSC project team and external consultants, will provide companies with a pool of high-impact projects promoting cultural diversity.

Phase 2: January - May 2024

The platform prototype was built by four students from Université Paris Cité's [Bachelor's in Information Technology](#) program as part of a project tutored by CSSC project researchers between January and May 2024. It was tested by pilot companies and presented at a [webinar held on May 22, 2024](#).

The webinar's objectives were to close the phase of the project funded by Université Paris Cité, report on its progress, present the prototype developed by the students and outline future expectations and developments.



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The conference was opened by Lilian Richieri Hanania and Anne-Thida Norodom. Initially, a brief presentation of the key people and entities participating in the project gave participants an overview of the diversity of the players involved. This was followed by a detailed presentation of the project's progress, highlighting the CSSC Questionnaire development process, its methodology, the scoring grid and the resulting company rankings. The prototype developed by UP Cité students was also presented. The project's next steps were then described, including the current application for funding from BPI France, a potential collaboration with the "Liberté Living Lab" (LLL) incubator, and ongoing fund-raising efforts to ensure the project's sustainability and development.

The second part of the webinar, dedicated to exchanges with participants, featured valuable contributions from [Sandra Gebara Boni Hidalgo](#) (Legal Director at L'Oréal in Brazil), [Dione Assis](#) (Founder of "Black Sisters in Law"), [Silvia Heidrich](#) (HR Director at COFACE), [Neal Booker](#) (Diversity and Inclusion Manager at Yext), , [Antoine Sautenet](#) (CSR Director at Michelin), as well as [Julieta Sztterenlicht](#) and [Magdalena Suarez](#), both experts who worked for the city of [Buenos Aires](#) in Argentina.

The various speakers all stressed the importance of the CSSC project in meeting the needs of companies. The project is part of a context of growing demand from companies who are increasingly involved in projects promoting inclusion and diversity. Various examples of such interest in these subjects were highlighted, such as a partnership between L'Oréal Brazil and the Black Sisters in Law initiative, fostering the company's collaboration with black female lawyers in Brazil, the creation in 2021 of a team dedicated to DEI issues within Yext, the creation of an index enabling in-house assessment of diversity and inclusion at Michelin, or a platform connecting companies and artists in Buenos Aires.

Currently, there is a need for evaluation benchmarks that can enable further improvements and keep drawing the attention of corporate management to cultural diversity issues. Several speakers pointed out that through its questionnaire, rankings and examples of best practices, the CSSC project offers essential tools and benchmarks for companies to understand their strengths, areas for improvement, and new initiatives they might not have thought of. Inter-company rankings are an important benchmark for comparison with others, enabling companies to assess and improve their own sustainability strategy.

Emphasis was also placed on the innovative aspect of the future collaboration space dedicated to companies, the cultural sector and public players on the CSSC Platform. In particular, this space will enable companies to take a step back from their internal policies, dialogue more easily with outsiders, and grow their contribution to cultural diversity. The CSSC project will also be able to meet sustainability compliance and reporting needs, for example, under the CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) guideline.

Finally, the diversity embodied by the webinar speakers themselves served as a reminder that the needs addressed by the CSSC project differ from one region of the globe to another. Some countries are already well ahead in terms of taking



internal and/or external cultural diversity into account, while others find it more difficult to tackle the subject. By offering a response adapted to these different needs, the CSSC Platform aims to make virtuous practices in favor of cultural diversity visible and valuable, while energizing relations between companies, public players and the cultural sector.

Phase 3: June - October 2024

From June 2024 onwards, the platform will be made more complex by the addition of further functionalities, the usefulness of which was identified during the interviews conducted in Phase 1 with the various stakeholders:

- Presenting and spotlighting companies involved in the promotion of culture through additional, more granular rankings.
- Tracking performance over time.
- Offering a collaboration space for companies.
- Connecting the private sector with artists and other professionals in the cultural and creative sectors.

Additional funding

In the short term, the CSSC project team will need to fund:

- The IT partner who will transfer the CSSC platform to another host, with the multiple additional functionalities envisioned, using generative artificial intelligence tools (enabling pre-filling the CSSC Questionnaire by ingesting the companies' public reports).
- Ongoing work to analyze the data collected, produce innovative reports and enhance the CSSC platform.
- Management and coordination of the various activities leading to the creation of a legal entity outside of the university.

In the medium term, to make the project autonomously viable, the team will need financial support to fund:

- Legal advice on the choice of the most appropriate legal structure for the project.
- Adequate communication and marketing to raise the profile of the project and make it more effective, with the aim of developing an international platform across all sectors of economic activity.



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- Ongoing work to analyze the data collected, produce innovative reports and enhance the CSSC platform.
- Management and coordination of the various activities of the legal entity created.

In the longer term, once the research methodology has been validated in the cultural sector and the appropriate legal structure found for transferring the project to the economic stage, the project will also aim to deploy its know-how and methodology for identifying and assessing the needs and actions of various stakeholders in other sectors, starting with cybersecurity, another of the team's research specialties.

This deployment in other sectors will show whether the methodology used in the field of contribution to cultural diversity can be directly transposed to a totally different sector of activity, or whether it requires adjustments, and if so, what kind. Assuming the methodology is successfully transposed, it may then be applied to the evaluation of any public policy involving corporate action in the public interest.