**Questions by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights**

The next report to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Ms. Karima Bennoune, will focus on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the exercise of cultural rights and on the role of culture and cultural rights in responding to the pandemic.

1. What have been the impacts on cultural rights and on cultural life\* of:

*\* Cultural rights include the rights to take part in cultural life without discrimination, to access and enjoy heritage, to artistic and scientific freedom, and to benefit from scientific knowledge and its applications. Cultural life includes performing arts, museums, heritage sites, sports and public spaces used for a variety of cultural and social gatherings*.

a. the pandemic?

Despite the long recession period that the country has been through since 2008, **cultural life** in Greece has been vibrant, be it with or without state support. Public, private (cultural foundations) and independent actors are all operational. In some cases though, such as the theater, this year has been more difficult than others. The degree of **cultural rights’ enjoyment** from mid-February to mid-March, had already shown signs of deterioration. The overall climate of fear that had started to spread in the Greek society, since early February, has resulted in **a certain degree of** **hesitation** by **the public to visit** **cultural spaces** (e.g. theaters, cinemas etc). Additionally, rumors preceding the official announcement of the implementation of various confinement measures and closures of the cultural sector, have led to an **early or immediate** **cancellation of certain cultural productions.** Thus,with little or varying degree of warning to the workers involved, most received none or little financial assistance.

1. measures taken to respond to the pandemic?

On the **13th****of March 2020,** the **COVID-19 Committee of Experts of the Greek Ministry of Health** recommended the [suspension of all activities](https://www.moh.gov.gr/articles/ministry/grafeio-typoy/press-releases/6867-anastolh-leitoyrgias-meta-apo-eishghsh-ths-epitrophs-empeirognwmonwn-toy-ypoyrgeioy-ygeias) in an extensive number of spaces for a period of 15 days. This included, theaters, cinemas and cultural spaces, libraries, museums, archaeological and historical sites, sports facilities, sports clubs and cultural associations. Open air sports spaces were left operating strictly allowing individual exercise. Cultural life, in its’ previously known form came thus to a total halt in mid-March, directly impacting the enjoyment of cultural rights. The suspension of activities became effective as of the 14th of March and lasted till mid-May. [The gradual re-activation](https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=3268) of the above mentioned spaces has been announced starting mid-May, along with a set of measures for the support of culture and detailed health prevention and other rules. The re-opening of **indoors theater scenes remains still unknown,** thus impacting the rights of thousands of actors, producers and theater owners, who cannot proceed with the implementation of the next year’s programming.

There was a common reaction in many art workers to offer their work online (opening a hasty discussion on intellectual property rights/ copyright and the free online projection of recorded theatrical plays, dance, opera etc). Various artists also found ways to express themselves, create and share new content through e-events and e-collaborations, while cultural foundations created online cultural spaces, safeguarding to a certain, limited extent access to culture and cultural/artistic production. While it was a time for self-reflection and re-assessment of how to present art for parts of the sector, most importantly, it became an issue of how to collectively organise to protect the rights of the sector and to ensure access to culture and artistic production.

Based on the data from the [press release](https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/e262b208-484b-7361-4ae4-ea5eec729a22) of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (July 17, 2020), “concerning the enterprises and the activities of the economy as a whole, the turnover in the first quarter 2020 amounted to 65,044,881 thousand euro, recording a decrease of 2.9% in comparison with the first quarter 2019. Τhe largest decrease in turnover, between the first quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2019 was recorded from the enterprises of the section **Arts, Entertainment and Recreation** (14.9%)”. This information relates only to that part of the sector that is functioning in an official administrative capacity. Conditions severely deteriorated for the majority of the people working in the complex, precarious conditions of the cultural/art sector.

2. What efforts have been made to guarantee the exercise of cultural rights, in accordance with the requirements of public health? How has the message that cultural life must be enjoyed in ways that respect public health and medical expertise been communicated?

“**STAY at HOME – MENOUME SPITI”** was the nation-wide campaign of the Greek government in order to protect public health in all sectors of life and work.[[1]](#footnote-0) Adhering to this campaign, the Ministry of Culture (hereafter MoC) implemented various measures/actions as an effort to guarantee the exercise of cultural rights and the continuation of cultural life. [Here](https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view_announcement.aspx?nID=4268) is a full list of measures announced or adopted by the MoC, during and after the lockdown period.

During the lockdown period, the [main course of action](https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=3176) suggested was to diffuse pre-existing material online (free or not) and create new digital cultural content and e-events, virtual museum tours etc enhancing the *stay at home* rule. Following the lifting of the confinement measures, the gradual re-opening of the cultural sector officially took place on May 18 (archaeological sites, rehearsals and plays, film productions), June 1st (cinemas, dance schools and sports clubs) and June 15 (museums and cultural schools). At that time, MoC and the [National Public Health Organisation](https://eody.gov.gr/en/covid-19/) (NPHO) have provided most cultural actors, with [detailed guidelines](https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/announcements/SitePages/announcements.aspx?p=2) specifying the general rule of *social distancing, operation in limited capacity, and the use of mask,* further specified through sectoral emails.

A few examples include:

* Theaters: 1,5 meter between actors, 3 meters from the stage, initially in 40% capacity that changed into 70% capacity (not a general rule).
* Archaeological sites: 1,5 meter between visitors.
* Museums: 2 meters between visitors.
* Drama/Music Schools: Due to a last-minute call to open, directors were unprepared and requested an extension, so they finally did open in June. Prohibition of certain courses are still in place e.g, wind instruments.

A few problems include:

* Smaller groups of visitors/spectators resulted in less income.
* Smaller productions created less working positions.
* Exclusion of very small productions from cultural creation, due to their inability to cover production costs under the new rules and regulations.
* Quality of productions at stake. The productions that managed to be included in the official Summer Cultural activities (e.g. All Greece One Culture, Athens & Epidaurus Festival, National Theatre etc), are either last year’s repetitions or have been produced last minute and under pressure.
* Absence of an open and fair application procedure for participating cultural productions under “All Greece One Culture – Oli I Ellada enas Politismos”[[2]](#footnote-1)(55 cultural productions)

3. What roles have culture and cultural rights played in responding to the pandemic:

1. At the individual and collective levels, including in building resilience and solidarity, and memorializing victims?

Culture played a core role in the emotional and psychological balance of the **whole population** during the lockdown. Films, music, online performances, online exhibitions, books, all were and remain life-saving tools for the public and access to cultural products was safeguarded one way or another. The nurturing effect of culture has definitely built resilience and brought hope. Fatality and infection rates in Greece remained relatively low, the shock was mostly imported by the images of the hundreds of deaths abroad and the fear of the disease and the unknown.

On a **collective level,** the people within the culture sector self-organised. The acute need for connection, collective action, organisation in unions, creation of new unions or re-initiation of inactive ones became apparent. The **Support Art Workers** movement (hereafter SAW) was created as a need, a platform aiming to encompass all cultural workers, shed light into the chaotic working conditions and promote their rights collectively. SAW activities are developing via working groups and subgroups. One of them, the **Solidarity Working Group**, is aiming to support art workers in need. To this end, members of the group connected with health care providers and other entities to provide necessities and ensure support (free consultations, exams, treatment medicines, products). This action is on-going. Legal advice as well administrative support, are also offered via the different working groups.

Many other associations/unions/FB groups, working in different fields co-organised online discussions, collective projects, protests and more, in order to keep their art alive, cultivate self-resilience, to serve the public and demand the protection of their rights.

**Examples of solidarity (cultural or not) projects:**

SAW own projects and protests’ participation during the pandemic:

07.05.2020 [Protest](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx7Ip-4hpYw) organised by various culture associations / unions

07.05.2020 [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rzomvMo7As) by art and culture workers in Thessaloniki

08.05.2020 [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOeC8D52XeE) by art and culture workers in Patra

13.05.2020 [Grup Yorum Solidarity](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouJSeTiBM-4&fbclid=IwAR2rXHdVbT_CGxcvkgLhw9wP_Ng3oFaTBPhZEKOPOrsJHUMQnPcXnc56TEg&app=desktop) video in honour and solidarity with Grup Yorum members

18.05.2020 [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOCRT0skg_g) by art and culture workers in Larissa

21.05.2020 World Culture Day Rally

23.05.2020 [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-7A2lRNL1U) by art and culture workers in Rhodes

24.05.2020 [1000 poems’ wall](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=548446772482937)

03.06.2020 Protest organised by various culture associations / unions

12.06.2020 [The whole city a Canvas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfV_-jFx0uQ)

12.06.2020 [Experiential Workshop](https://www.facebook.com/events/1187969061551389/)

19.06.2020 [Re-evaluation Counselling/R.C](https://www.facebook.com/events/297102827988928/)

15.07.2020 Protest organised by various culture associations / unions

28.07.2020 “[Which Side are you on](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc3Pnwn6Eb0)” video denouncing police violence against antifascists

Other actors

07.04.2020 [World Health Day /Pandemic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVeEgCLyhyc&fbclid=IwAR1O1hYR_tS5vyMLwh8J-dhTJ8HWbG9FadV1XClMw975ovZ1s72ZBdi9aaw) – Hellenic Actors Union

14.06.2020 – “ Dance is Present ”[protest interventions](https://www.facebook.com/SeXwXoSomateioErgazomenonStoXwroTouXorou/posts/3366267423424549?__cft__%5B0%5D=AZWVcn1VG6xoEEgfOBgLBFYLt7qL39NBlRZslBUsqFlQBh5acAQfPCOv178rEVTxu9oDDUh7D02-0iqpAgBqc3JJONeR8X8CsD9lrCQo-r2kOxenucr05ZKW4wYdNrT4BtJqcvoNM4mKhoI_EVRja_15a5puFRENlPYEMWmbMr3hWXpHdD0nu9G1fkLLW3fuWWwlITBOJ6HwX-3TZbZRRitNK6m-Hc4nQhG68Jxi-6V9DDnuPZBordmFsKx18atT3vpGjaqgywLvlFVY-Ah7ia8t&__tn__=-UC%2CP-R) in events organized throughout the summer period, excluding the art of dance – [Association of Workers in the Dance Sector](https://sexwxo.weebly.com/)

22.07.2020 [Musical Rally](https://www.facebook.com/%CE%A0%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%AE%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%9C%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82-%CE%A3%CF%8D%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%A0%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1-%CE%A4%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC%CE%BB%CF%89%CE%BD-106379751112101/) to demand the rights of their members and other workers / Panhellenic Music Association – Trikala Branch

[Call](https://www.monopoli.gr/2020/07/21/showtimes/theatre/403713/athinaiki-skini-kalvou-kalampoki-dorean-kallitexnikes-draseis-sto-anoixto-theatro-gkravas/) of the Athenian Scene Kalvos Kalampokis and Hellenic Actors Union Solidarity Fund for the collection of food and other necessities in lieu of a ticket for people in need.

1. At the scientific level, to provide adequate information to inform public policy and ensure public awareness?

Well know actors and actresses, who have easy access to the public, have participated in TV spots, as part of the “STAY at HOME – Menoume Spiti” national campaign. They have provided basic information in order to bring awareness to the general public over appropriate precautions against the dangers posed by the pandemic.

1. In any other relevant manner?

The mobilisation of art and culture workers pushing for their just demands had a domino effect in the mobilisation of other segments of the population, cultivating inspiration, optimism and the desire to fight for human rights. Immediately after the birth of SAW movement, some of its members took the initiative to create the movement “[SUPPORT EARTH](https://www.facebook.com/groups/237638414204882/?fref=nf&__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARC9fGEBUli_FDmXbShXMA70-eAg0tLeYfH9TFhOCMNeXUJCMdXROUPlkPN1WclUoy3qM-PzF6y3-BaUzKedDcSQxr86jHjkg8cAZ4P78k7ZJnnjtrViXSh1nTwKp9QAZPuf89Y9tLl7WC-aXO-TbrmKgHQlW9ZRnX6nj1iqn7MLdopVafrlOuWpTiECAhT84Q5SKpQuDPOoowsdTHezUZzQXwMv80XaOeg3GsduTjWqdjdjG4N1nTYPhOgJbLmZZuUv-LbE27rln9JiikwrlESjJwc9HffBQJUhJLQ0IxufhwBgOpYPPR2C2UCAPhB73wkgst9Crh674rJ32_1LBR8t7VUg2TWa2G-vTFri1UHnZ4ZOZA&__tn__=C-R)” and raise awareness on the alarming problems of climate change and other environmental issues. As a result of more people being organized on a grassroots level, in which different calls for action took place, even more diverse groups came together offering more hope and strength, in this unstable period we are going through.

4) What steps have been taken to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, and of measures to counter the pandemic, on the cultural sector and on the human rights of those working in it (including artists, athletes, cultural heritage professionals, cultural workers, librarians, museum workers and scientists)?

As the pandemic is still developing, Greece is now facing a worsening situation. The **impact** of the lockdown measures and the closure of financial activity for many sectors of the economy touched upon thousands of workers who have tried to raise their voices through their respective unions and other collective efforts. The culture sector has been suffering for many years from volatility and precariousness, rendering a rapid and efficient horizontal implementation of relief and recovery plan difficult and full of obstacles. The current analysis is focusing mainly on artists and cultural workers, as these are the workers’ categories whose voices were heard through the activities of SAW movement and who actively participated in the movements’ collective actions. The sudden and absolute halt of the financial activity of the cultural sector came as a shock. From March, there was an urgent need for a relief plan, in order to address immediate **basic needs, such as food and housing.**

a.) How has the cultural sector, and those working in it, reshaped accordingly to the pandemic? How have these adaptations been received and supported by the public, including financially? Are there sectors of the population that may risk exclusion from such adaptations?

Art workers have followed four different **modifications**, either separately or combined. The first one was to collectively organise and demand their rights through numerous official letters by many unions and federations of unions, exposing, in detail, the issues pertaining to their sector towards the authorities, and/or the general public. One example includes the highest participation in late June of the elections in the Hellenic Actors’ Union, unlike the previous “absence” practices of the past decades. Τhe second, was to create new, or use past cultural work, and diffuse it online. The third includes self-reflection of their work and their role in culture, in the new era of the pandemic (e.g, many e-discussions have taken place, encompassing different actors of the sector). The fourth was their presence and voice in solidarity of many other societal needs and challenges both online, as well as in the streets ( as analysed in question 3).

The **public** has shown a high degree of empathy of these problems. A large number of cultural products went online for free, creating an even bigger complexity in the endeavor of protecting and promoting the rights of the sector. We are not aware of any large organized, financial or otherwise, support by the public but the plight of art workers were well-received. SAW movement has received a very wide endorsement and our facebook branding logo has traveled extensively both in Greece and abroad, offering visibility to our work, our needs and our demands for the protection of our rights. Artists have been offered space to express their issues in only a few newspapers.

During the period after the lockdown, that has allowed for a number of cultural activities to re-start under the new strict guidelines concerning health protection and prevention against the COVID-19, the general public has the opportunity to support both with physical presence (limited places) and financial contribution (tickets). From June till today, it seems that the public is responsive and participates, following the new rules on how one can currently enjoy culture in Greece.

**Exclusion from such adaptations** is noted in relation to numerous small/medium scale productions and all minorities of the **independent sector**.

A concluding remark is that since creativity is a form of resilience in itself, at any given time and space, some art workers continued to create art, exactly as “survival means”. However, this has not been possible for others, such as those involved in production, distribution and are employed in technical jobs. **Particularly affected professionals, and with no real protection include events’ photographers, street musicians, and street artists.** This sector is still devising short and long-term adaptation strategies and is pushing for a realization of a meaningful, and inclusive vision of culture in Greece.

b.) What kind of measures will be necessary to rebuild the cultural sector going forward? How will inclusion be addressed?

**The culture sector is its workers.** Their voice must be heard and their guidance must become the basis of all kinds of measures. The social and economic rights of culture workers must be enjoyed in the country mostly known as the “Cradle of Democracy,” along with the rights of all workers that have been systematically and brutally attacked by neo-liberal policies, foreign debts and non-transparent channeling of European and other funds lost somewhere within systemic state mismanagement. There is a systemic problem in Greece when it comes to public spending and it is urgent in the current circumstances to ensure full transparency in all decisions and funding schemes for recovery. Mismanagement by the MoC in the current emergency situation must be avoided.[[3]](#footnote-2)

In light of the urgency to form and adopt a recovery plan, SAW movement successfully organized the first open public assembly on the 29th of June, having an open discussion on the function of the movement itself, along with an overview of the actual problems (from art workers, for art workers) and concluding with an open dialogue with all interested participants (from art workers to society). One main obstacle for the protection and promotion of the rights of art workers is the need to **address their multi-sectoral and multi-thematic diverse needs**. The lack of a coherent vision for culture by the government, while favoring all kinds of private interests and facilitating the dominance of wealthy private culture institutions, has to be overcome. The latest decision of the Ministry of Education to withdraw art courses from school curricula is dis-concerning as to the direction the current government is currently adopting for cultural education and the formation of creative and open-minded children in Greece.

Our viewpoint and main request in that aspect, is how to build a resilient cultural sector in the immediate and long future, through **open and ongoing dialogue of all individuals, associations and unions of the sector, along with the relevant authorities.** The role of the artists must be further acknowledged in the Greek society and the collective mentality of art workers as “people who are just doing their hobbies” must change. In support of a grassroots **approach,** we demand **open, inclusive and transparent consultations**, that lead to the enjoyment of cultural rights for all, and a culture that aims to educate the public, instead of just an empty letter of modern cultural management. The voice of the **minorities in the sector** must also be heard. To this end, SAW is organising an **open discussion Forum in Νοvember** **2020** that will proceed to a map of all actors, create individualized solutions and push for bold decisions by the authorities. Health insurance, social security and unemployment benefits must go along with the protection of the rights to create and have access to cultural products. We are at the frontline of this work both for our sector as well as for the society at large, encompassing in our work socio-economic, as well as environmental sustainability.

c.) Has your Government already envisaged / announced specific measures to support the culture sector during and after the pandemic? How will relevant constituencies participate in their development and implementation?

Following the voices raised by art and culture workers on the dire conditions of the sector, different sets of special measures have been announced by MoC. All initial measures related to the support of the culture sector–during and after the lockdown- are listed [here](https://www.culture.gov.gr/DocLib/%CE%9C%CE%B5%CC%81%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%20%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CC%81%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BE%CE%B7%CF%82%20%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%20%CE%A0%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%85%CC%81%20%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%20%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD%20%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B1%CE%B6%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%B5%CC%81%CE%BD%CF%89%CE%BD%20%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85.pdf). Measures announced during the lockdown were meant as relief, while measures following the lockdown are meant as recovery and the future.

The announcement of most measures has caused great confusion and insecurity for large segments of the cultural sector (including thousands of art workers) in Greece. In many cases, it was and still is unclear who its beneficiaries are. The eligibility criteria were not always fair or logical, and a total disregard of the complex and precarious working conditions in the cultural sector. Due to the word-limit restriction in this document, we present a selection of measures in a non-comprehensive manner:

* **March 2020 / Special Purpose Compensation of 800,00euros** (534,00 per month for the period mid-March to end April, and later extended for May). No additional announcement for the period after May. The amount does not include rental allowance.

**Beneficiaries:** Too complicated an issue, with irrational criteria (e.g. need for at least 2024 euros income related to cultural activity, or certain number of working days in 2018), thus excluding many workers. Additionally, workers dismissed in February due to early shut downs of productions were not included. New categories of beneficiaries were later introduced as an amendment, but failed to include those workers who do not fall under any of those listed categories. Some received both 1st & 2nd installments, while some only the 1st, and others who were eligible to apply, received none. Various technical obstacles in the applications process, especially in the new categories of beneficiaries (e.g. Category L).

**Demand**: The extension of the measure in all categories that were initially excluded and the resolution of the issue of late installments.

* **March 2020 / Financial assistance of 2000,00euros** (deposited in late July, while social security obligations were not suspended)

**Beneficiaries:** non-profit organizations (hereafter AMKE). Valid for only those who have not received prior funding from MoC and have registered in the AMKE registrar till 30.04.2020. The issues being, no legal obligation for an AMKE to be registered in the specific registrar, and even if an AMKE can still register, the ministry refuses to include any AMKE that registered after 30.04.

**Demand:** Horizontal inclusion of all AMKE that proceed to registration without deadlines.

**Note on ART WORKERS REGISTRAR**

The MoC has requested registration of all art/culture workers. While mapping of the sector is urgently needed, the reason behind setting a deadline is still unknown and there is a fear that it will be used to define eligibility for further financial support. The platform does not include various professions of the sector and there is no possibility to add more than one specialization per person.

Notwithstanding the many serious pending issues and various controversies, the following positive measures have been announced by the MoC:

* 20.000 free tickets for Public Health System Doctors and Nurses (with the support of National Opera of Greece)
* [Non-closure of the theater SFENDONI -ΣΦΕΝΔΟΝΗ](https://www.efsyn.gr/node/253446) following the personal intervention of the Minister of Culture. **Not all art spaces will have the same future as** **many have either already closed** (eg [MPIP –ΜΠΙΠ](https://www.catisart.gr/dysaresto-kleinei-to-theatro-mpip-stin-kypseli/)) **or are expected to**.
* Exemption of fees for events in archaeological sites from 10.07 -30.09
* 1.350.000 euros [financial support to the peripheries for](https://covid19.gov.gr/1-350-000-evro-apo-to-ypourgio-politismou-ke-athlitismou-gia-drasis-politismou-stis-periferies/) [concerts during](https://covid19.gov.gr/1-350-000-evro-apo-to-ypourgio-politismou-ke-athlitismou-gia-drasis-politismou-stis-periferies/) [summer 2020](https://covid19.gov.gr/1-350-000-evro-apo-to-ypourgio-politismou-ke-athlitismou-gia-drasis-politismou-stis-periferies/) (due to the worsening of the pandemic and current reported cases, concerts’ cancellations have already been announced)
* The strengthening of copyright protection with the new possibility for “[Dynamic Blocking Injuction](https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=3389)”
* Total amount of yearly grants for theaters increased now to 2.000.000 with the parallel extension of the academic year (implementation period). **The bureaucracy around these funds is immense.**

**Note on DANCE**

The [Dance Workers’ Union](https://sexwxo.weebly.com/), state in their latest press release (31.07):

“……one can only find just a handful of modern Greek dance performances in state scenes and festivals. This year’s absense of the art of dance from the Hellenic Festival and the total absence of independent dance productions in the action «All Greece one Culture –Όλη η Ελλάδα ένας πολιτισμός» is just the tip of the iceberg of a long-standing preferential cultural policy...we demand...equal presence of the art of modern dance in the cultural programming of the MoC and of the various festivals and MoC supervised entities, transparent procedures and open calls concerning the programming of festivals and other cultural activities, stable state support for independent creators, the establishment of a space for and from dance, transparent funding of artistic and theoretical research and production, the establishment of a public tuition free Dance University..”.

Despite certain genuine efforts by the different festival organizers, for the inclusion of dance in their programs, the final absence of dance has been profound. Such discriminatory practices, pre-existed, the level thus of rights’ enjoyment for all workers in the dance sector deteriorated even further. Avoiding the preferential contracts’ practices, safeguarding open procedures and the inclusion of the art of dance in the programming of all cultural activities are the clear and just demands of dance professionals in order to effectively serve their profession, towards the goal of dance education.

Although not included in the initial response development plans, **many relevant constituencies** have been in contact with the MoC through official letters and meeting requests. We cannot yet fully assess the extent to which the Ministry has been responsive to all of the requests. While some meetings have already taken place (eg Hellenic Actors Union and others), and SAW has also been invited to participate in the [discussion of the Standing Committee of](https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/ToKtirio/Fotografiko-Archeio/#bc3fa68e-9339-4e6f-a71b-abf800ac4abc) [Cultural and Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament in relation to the future of “ACROPOL”](https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/ToKtirio/Fotografiko-Archeio/#bc3fa68e-9339-4e6f-a71b-abf800ac4abc), other important constituencies have been excluded. A new vision for culture in Greece, in this new challenging era, must be born with the active involvement of all actors. We also expect that the MoC will perform the **many necessary corrective steps, involving** the announced relief and recovery plans for the sector, and follow respective open and on-going consultations with all.

Despite the measures announced to address the impact in cultural life and safeguard cultural rights and the rights of art workers, the sector being highly unregulated, is now compounded with obscurity of the future to come. In light of the actual conditions, we are worried that new restrictions may re-appear in the months to come, when the possibility to use open spaces will fade out and cultural life will come to a standstill. Financial relief is of utmost importance, along with tackling the underlying problems that pertain to the sector and adherence to digitization in an organized, equal and fair manner.

5. Have scientific and medical experts been able to express themselves freely about the pandemic, its impacts and needed responses? What measures have been taken to address the denial of scientific information about the pandemic, and to ensure access to reliable scientific information to guide policymaking and personal choices.

**Concerning the pandemic and its impacts, it is** considered that the scientific/medical community **enjoyed a certain freedom to express themselves in any direction they chose.** The reliability of the information that the public received is something to be further assessed. It remains questionable whether the measures adopted throughout this period have been the proper ones. The official state authorities adopted conflicting suggestions over time (e.g. the use of masks in open and closed spaces) and changing opinion (e.g. the level in which children can be potential “super spreaders” of the disease), creating confusion and grounds to challenge the validity of certain measures, including the lockdown.

**As far as needed responses are concerned,** while the movement [Support Health Workers](https://www.facebook.com/111463993918542/posts/178378237227117/) has organized rallies and discussions shedding light to the shameful realities on the ground for health workers, t[he public health care system in Greece has been seriously undermined since 2008 and during the recession](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/266380/The-impact-of-the-financial-crisis-on-the-health-system-and-health-in-Greece.pdf?ua=1) (permanent closure of public hospitals, brutal salary cuts, dismissal of health workers, general attitude of favoring private interests in the health sector). When the pandemic broke out in Greece, the public health system was already under enormous stress and was expected to collapse in the scenario of a severe outbreak of COVID-19, but managed to avoid such till even today. It is extremely alarming, especially in light of the current worsening status of the pandemic in Greece, that the Greek government did not choose to meaningfully support the public health system in spring 2020, but rather placed responsibility onto the citizens’ hands, calling for the “individual responsibility”. In that respect, there are many voices from within the health sector that speak out against alleged public communication “tricks” used to cover-up the alarming conditions and dangers faced by the public hospitals.[[4]](#footnote-3) Additionally, there are both official complaints by hospital doctors, as well as unofficial information diffused in the society through social channels, that there have been violations of the rights to freedom of expression of the medical personnel.[[5]](#footnote-4)

There has been no significant “**denial movement”** in Greece, rather sporadic internet posts calling the population not to abide by the rules and regulations of the government regarding the protection against the pandemic (e.g. the use of masks). According to a latest [press release](http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=GR&perform=view&id=7147&Itemid=702?option=ozo_search&lang=EN&lang=GR), the Minister of Public Order & Citizen Protection has ordered the Cyber Crime Division of the Greek Police, to forward any denial related online material to the Public Prosecutor of the Court of First Instance for criminal liability check.[[6]](#footnote-5)

Interviews:

Ms Valeria Dimitriadou, Actress – Musician, SAW

Mr Yannis Panagopoulos, Actor – Educator, Board Member of the Hellenic Actors Union, SAW

Penny Papaspyropoulou

Human Rights Specialist

Researcher and author, on behalf of SUPPORT ART WORKERS

1. An additional note on **freedom of press:** A scandal broke out in relation to the partisan way the funds of the “Stay at Home” media campaign have been distributed to the Greek media, raising the public criticism of the Greek government not only by the national and international media entities but also by the [Council of Europe.](https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom/detail-alert?p_p_id=sojdashboard_WAR_coesojportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_pos=2&p_p_col_count=3&_sojdashboard_WAR_coesojportlet_alertId=69100052) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.efsyn.gr/node/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. [The Hellenic Directors’ Union](https://camerastyloonline.wordpress.com/2020/08/12/kataggelia-pros-tin-ethniki-arxi-diafaneias-apo-tin-etaireia-ellinon-skinotheton/) is denouncing the lack of transparency in the selection procedures of the Greek Film Centre for the distribution of 2.800.000 euros in support of film creators impacted by the pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Read [here](https://rosa.gr/dieythyntria-esy-den-antechoyme-tis-anoisies-poy-akoyme-gia-tin-epiklisi-sto-filotimo-ichitiko/) the recent interview of a hospital director detailing numbers related to dismissals/cuts and shortages. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. [The Hellenic Confederation of Hospital Doctors Unions (ΟΕΝΓΕ)](https://www.oengegr.com/post/%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BF%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B3%CE%B5-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CF%8C%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82) [denounced the](https://www.oengegr.com/post/%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BF%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B3%CE%B5-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CF%8C%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82) [practices](https://www.oengegr.com/post/%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%BF%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B3%CE%B5-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CF%8C%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82) of both the National TV (ERT) as well the government, for deliberately blocking the flow of information towards the general public, in relation to the serious medical staff and material shortages and the lack of preparedness for a comprehensive COVID-19 response, in all public hospitals. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Under the authority of the current Minister, Greece is recording an intense deterioration of the systemic problem of police violence, against the peaceful exercise of democratic rights, [the right to protest](https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/10/greece-violence-erupts-at-rally-in-athens-against-new-protest-law) and the many voices of human rights defenders and/or non-supporters and critics of the current government. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)