

International survey of the North East Culture sector

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Introduction

As requested at the first meeting of the international sub-group in 2015, an international survey was designed and disseminated to find out which countries: local authorities, cultural and heritage organisations are currently working with, and wish to work with during the next 5-10, and 10+ years.

The survey was sent to 85 organisations on 22 October. Forty seven responded by 7 December; two of whom advised that they did not have any international links, giving a response rate of 56%.

Results

Quantitative analysis

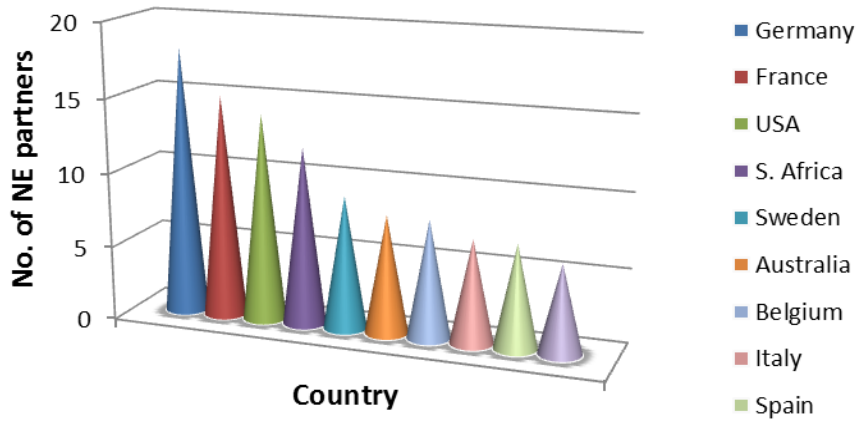
The 45 NE cultural organisations who responded to the survey are working with 61 countries at present (31% of the countries in the world): Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, , Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Macedonia (FYROM) Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Ireland, Qatar, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, The Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela.

The ten most popular countries to work with per time period

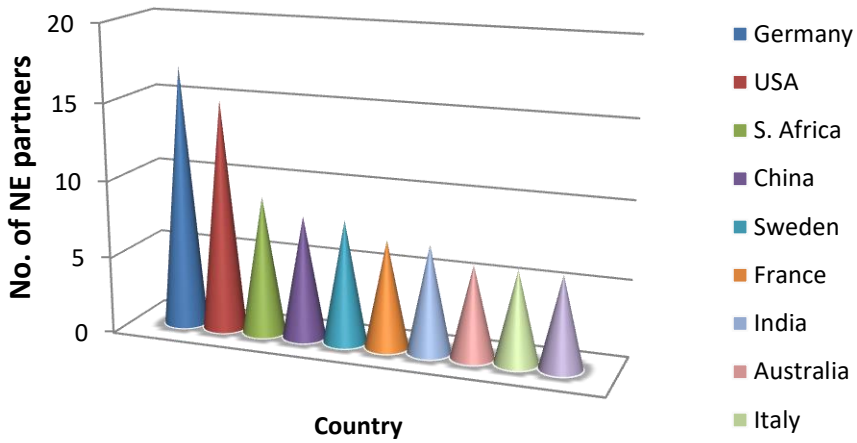
Analysing the results, the top ten countries in terms of the number of NE cultural organisations working with each country, per time period surveyed:

Now	Number of respondents working with country	Next 5-10 years	Number of respondents wishing to work with this country	Next 10-15 years	Number of respondents working with this country
Germany	18	Germany	17	Germany	8
France	15	USA	15	USA	6
USA	14	S. Africa	9	China	4
S Africa	12	China	8	France	4
Sweden	9	Sweden	8	Japan	4
Australia	8	France	7	S. Africa	3
Belgium	8	India	7	Australia	2
Italy	7	Australia	6	Ireland	2
Spain	7	Italy	6	Poland	2
China	6	Japan	6	South Korea	2

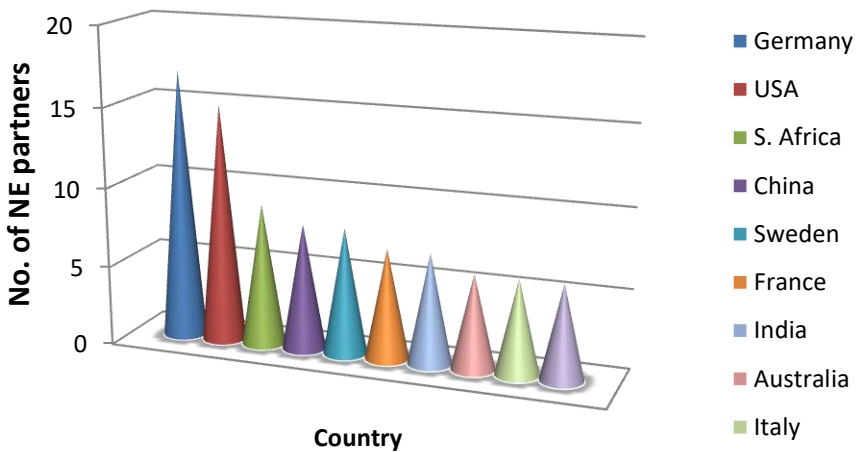
Top 10 international partnerships now



Top 10 international partnerships in next 5 years



Top 10 international partnerships in 10-15 years



The range of countries

Respondents are currently working with 1-27 countries, with the range changing to 1-14 countries for each of the time periods in the future.

Qualitative analysis

Import/export balance and the main reasons for international working

Grouping the projects reported by the 45 respondents into an “import/export model” shows that at least 37% of the activity is reciprocal/of mutual benefit, and that the “export” activity is double the “import” activity:

No. & type of projects: Incoming activity	No. & type of projects: Mainly outgoing activity	No. & type of projects: Reciprocal activity/mutual benefit
39	78	69
Research/artist residencies/internships	Artist: residencies and secondments	Artist/teacher/staff exchange visits; information/artist/ knowledge exchange, networking, collaboration
Networking	Tours/performances/music festivals/concerts	Participation in EU funded projects
Research visits	Provision of consultancy	Bilateral meetings
Exhibitions	Mentoring & staff development	Town twinning
Festivals	Trade fairs, art fairs	Meetings to develop international links
School & university visits	Exhibitions, showcases	Co-production of e.g.: films
Work placements	Study/cultural/research visits	Running “international schools” in NE for UK and other international creatives.
Performances	Collection/exhibition loans	Online platforms
Art installations/festival participation in NE	Fulfilling commissions/offering NE venues for commissions	Staff development
	Deliver workshops/post-show discussions, summer or winter schools, mentoring	Networks
	Hosting conferences in NE/giving lectures/speaking at symposia overseas	Project development

Financial cost of international working to N.E organisations

Not all respondents answered the optional financial questions for the 193 projects they described and, as one of the questions was “financial cost of this international cost to your organisation”, some cultural practitioners replied £0 as they had received grant/earned income¹. Therefore, the analysis below only includes the 26 projects which reported both the cost and the grant/earned income resulting from engagement in international collaboration: £716,120 vs. an income of £975,468, giving a surplus of £259,348.

Cost range for all 193 projects in the survey (£) ¹	Grant/earned income range for all 193 projects in the survey (£)	Mean average cost/project for the 26 projects (£)	Mean average income/project for the 26 projects (£)	Mean average Surplus/project for the 26 projects (£)
0-300,000	0-450,000	27,543	37,518	9,975

However, whilst the **median average** gives a very different picture: **£5,000 for cost**, and **£5,000 for grant/income**, demonstrating how a few large projects can give an unrepresentative picture of the scale of international projects in the North East's cultural sector, it is important to note that the benefits go beyond finance (see below)

Funding/earned income to N.E organisation to facilitate international working

Financial support was secured from many sources including: earned income; funding from conference delegates; public funding from: local authorities, Arts Council grants, British Council grants, UKTI, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, and the European Commission; sponsorship from private individuals or commercial businesses; grants from international foundations and networks, and self-support/financial support from parents.

Long-term planning

It was challenging for respondents to predict which countries they might be working with the next 10-15 years, with only 18 respondents completing this part of the survey. This could be due to a range of factors, such as the uncertainty of continuation funding, or it could suggest that cultural sector organisations might value help with long-term planning, and market development in the international arena.

Benefits and Challenges of international working

The survey also asked respondents about the benefits and challenges of international working.

Benefits

Respondents advised that working internationally benefits them in seven key ways:

1. **Inward investment.** International working can play a very important role in influencing cultural practitioners and their businesses about where they wish to live, work, visit, study and invest. It also demonstrates the outward facing nature of the North East, and helps to showcase the richness and depth of the North East's cultural offer. This is clearly an important issue in the context of the economic growth objectives of the whole of the North East.
2. **Increased profile and market for the N.E cultural offer:** Working internationally raises the profile and reach of NE cultural organisations and the North East. This helps to encourage more visitors to the NE, growing the NE tourism industry and the local economy. The increased profile enhances the cultural practitioners' reputation internationally. Working internationally also enables NE cultural practitioners to: meet buyers at major international markets; meet international programmers and producers, explore opportunities for co-production and co-commissioning opportunities, and participate in: showcases, performances, trade missions, conferences, and live touring.
3. **Income generation:** Partnering with international organisations enables NE cultural organisations to access alternative funding streams such as Creative Europe.

4. **Relationships:** The opportunity to forge long-lasting relationships with international partners, and the often associated benefit of strengthened NE/national relationships.
5. **Developing the future cultural practitioners:** Raises the aspirations of NE people to attend more cultural offerings, or to become cultural practitioners themselves.
6. **Professional development opportunities** – International working enables cultural practitioners to learn from others, develop skills, and gain new skills, via cultural collaboration and knowledge exchange/residences. It enables cultural practitioners to broaden their support network, and cultural knowledge beyond the NE/UK. It provides access to inspirational work, and cross-fertilisation between different art forms in other countries. Cultural practitioners can discover new ways of approaching their art-form, and experience new ways of living and working, and the opportunity to try out their ideas in different contexts. In addition, international working enables Cultural practitioners to see their work from an international perspective.
7. **Audience development:** Enables NE, and international, cultural practitioners to build audiences in other countries and in the N.E.

Challenges

The nine main challenges highlighted in the survey are:

1. **Long-distance relationships:** These are hard to find, develop and maintain over a long distance and require time and money to: travel, visit venues and festivals, international conferences and showcases.
2. **Resource constraints:** Respondents identified financial and staff time constraints. There is increasing pressure on continuous professional development budgets due to funding cuts. This negatively impacts on the quality and quantity of international activity due to the cost of international travel, accommodation and translation costs. Some respondents have had to turn down invitations to attend international events due to the costs involved. Respondents also mentioned that it is particularly challenging to find public or private funding to fund research and development work. Currency fluctuations cause additional problems, as do bank charges on overseas transactions.
3. **Limited foreign language capabilities** of N.E cultural organisations – so some organisations are choosing to work with overseas organisations which can communicate in English.
4. **Cultural awareness and managing expectations.** Overseas organisations may have different assumptions, expectations and ways of working to N.E organisations.
5. **Different time zones** – makes it harder to communicate in real time.
6. **False perceptions of international work** – some organisations have to counter the false perception that international travel is a “jolly”, meaning that they sometimes miss out on international opportunities.
7. **Practicalities** – several organisations cited the need for practical advice in: contracting, insurance, visas and immigration, general logistics, freight charges, transport of sets, DBS checks, developing genuine in-country knowledge.
8. **Need to adapt work for international audiences.**
9. **Alignment with organisational strategy:** Ensuring that international working aligns with your core organisational strategy is vital.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this survey, it is recommended that NECP:

1. Networks with the N.E cultural sector and Consulates, UKTI, and funders to develop relationships with cultural organisations in the top six most popular countries for NE cultural practitioners to work with according to this survey across all three time periods are: Germany (43), USA (35), France (26), S. Africa (24), Sweden (17) and China (12).

Thanks

Thanks go to the 45 organisations who kindly completed this survey:

Active Northumberland	Matthew Jarratt Cultural Consultancy
Amber Film & Photography Collective	Middlesbrough Council
ARC Stockton	National Glass Centre
Auckland Castle Trust	North East Photography Network
AV Festival	Newcastles of the World
Beamish Museum	New Writing North
The Bowes Museum	Northern Film & Media
Brian Debnam & Associates Ltd.	Northern Print
Circus Central	Open Clasp Theatre Company
Curious Monkey	Radio Film Ltd.
Darlington Borough Council	Sage Gateshead
Durham County Council	Stockton BC: Stockton International Riverside Festival
East Durham Creates	South Tyneside Council
Equal Arts	Sunderland City Council
Event International	Swallows Foundation UK
Fertile Ground	The Forge
Generator North East	Théâtre Sans Frontières
Hartlepool Borough Council	T-Junction
Helix Arts	Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
ISIS Arts	Unfolding Theatre
Let's Circus	VANE
Luxi Ltd.	Zendeh
MAC Trust	