

ATT: Programme Committee
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
RE: Meeting scheduled for March 18th 2025

17. marts 2025

Input from CISU regarding
The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual Exchange of Culture and the Arts
(2025-2028)

CISU has with great enthusiasm read the hearing material for *The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual Exchange of Culture and the Arts (2025-2028)*. We strongly believe in the relevance of the objectives of the fund and in strengthening cultural relations between Africa and Denmark. We also see a strong interest in strengthening cultural relations as we at CISU see that many partnerships applying CISUs existing grant opportunities are increasingly working with elements of culture and arts as part of their work to deliver social impact. This not only signals a higher level of influence of the cultural sector in terms of methodology among the more traditional development actors; it also signals a higher level of recognition of the impact these methodologies can lead to.

Importance of cross sectoral and popular anchored approach

CISU appreciates the mapping done for the preparation material. We can see that many activities are linked to RDEs across Africa. CISU wants to emphasize – as a supplement to all these good RDE linked initiatives - the importance of popular anchorage which will increase the diversity of applications, as well as this would sustain the focus on achieving the objectives of the fund. Popular involvement and anchorage further enhance community impact in both Denmark and Africa.

At CISU we experience a strong popular interest in working with culture and arts. CISU can inform the Programme Committee that 183 out of 472 (up until 2024) received applications by OpEn included collaboration around culture and the arts. Furthermore, CISU already organizes a professional, thematic network around using arts, sports and culture as a methodological entry point to delivering sustainable development results/community impact. This network has been developed to accommodate the increasing interest and choice of approach as indicated above.

CISU applauds the intended synergy with OpEn and Globus. CISU also welcomes the idea of a consortia model, as we from managing OpEn has experienced that the OpEn consortia has promoted the involvement of actors from and institutions particularly from the cultural sector as well as the private sector and civil society.

Importance of synergy between grant making and supportive advisory services

CISU agrees with the basic elements of the Fund manager setup, as there is strong evidence pointing to the unique Danish setup around “pooled funds” as promoting sustainability in the partnerships. Similarly, CISU also support the decision to allocate up to 13% for programme

support activities. We have from OpEn experience with programme support activities both enhancing high profiled events engaging actors across sectors as well as provision of advisory services for development of applications and implementation of grants which have been adding value to the initiatives. It is noted that the hearing material makes mention of a programme risk that is sought minimized through advisory services. CISU supports this analysis. It is, however, unclear whether the advisory services are perceived as a service before application, or only once a grant has been achieved. Based on our experience, it is crucial that advisory services are available before an application.

Importance of segregation of governance from grant decisions

CISU appreciates that it is intended to establish an international Steering Committee, similarly to what CISU practices in some of our fund structures. However, we would recommend the Steering Committee to focus on governance and strategic development of the fund including approvals of guidelines based on culture relevant professional criteria.

CISU does not see it beneficial that grant assessment and decision (as it seems from the material) should be done by the Steering Committee. It is our experience important to segregate governance structures such as a Steering Committee from specific grant assessment and decision processes based on relevant professional criteria. If the Steering Committee would get too involved in specific grant decisions this could compromise its important governance functions. We would rather recommend the establishment a structure based on grant assessments being done by specialist and forwarded for decisions to be made by a separate grant committee with key representatives from Africa and Denmark. This is a structure in many CISU funds which have been fully accepted by the Auditor General.

Importance of coordination with Embassies

It is furthermore positive with the perspectives to ensure contextual knowledge and coordination with the embassies. This has also been useful for CISU throughout our assessment procedures where embassy staff already provide commentary to larger applications that CISU grants. That said, the even closer coordination that is considered for this fund, including the work to secure visa, etc. is indeed valued perspectives as many examples exist where cultural exchanges have faced challenges around this.

In addition to the above CISU furthermore applauds the considerations towards building long-term relationships, ensuring local ownership and leadership which greatly resonates with what both CISU and CISU member organisations are already working to support.

Kind regards

CISU – Civil Society in Development