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Mobility Information Points (MIPs)

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Introduction

This information on Mobility Information Points (MIPs) addresses:

- organisations maintaining MIPs who wish to speak for MIPs/present MIPs during workshops/conferences, etc.
- organisations/individuals who are intending/wishing to set up a MIP.

Mobility Information Points (MIPs) are information centres and/or websites in several European countries, and one in the USA, who aim to tackle administrative challenges that artists and cultural professionals can face when working across borders.

Relevant issues (can) involve visas and work permits, social security, taxation, customs, etc. (for more information, see the section on “Information Standards”).

MIPs’ representatives are convinced that solutions can be provided to artists and cultural professionals working internationally through free information and customised services in a European, international and interconnected context.

Regarding the term mobility, MIPs refer to the definition suggested by On the Move in the i-Portunus Operational Study: “Mobility is a central component of the professional trajectory of artists and culture professionals. Involving a temporary cross-border movement, often for educational, capacity-building, networking, or working purposes, it may have tangible or intangible outputs in the short term, and/or be part of a long-term professional development process. Mobility is a conscious process, and those involved in it, whether by directly engaging in it or by supporting it, should consider its cultural, social, political, environmental, ethical and economic implications”.

Furthermore, the document Information Standards for the Mobility of Artists and Cultural Professionals (issued by an expert group on mobility information standards convened by the European Commission in 2011) is used as a reference point for existing MIPs.

The document includes a prioritised list of information topics which are relevant to mobility across borders, as well as content guidelines on customised information for cultural mobility and related recommendations (for more information, see the section on “Information Standards”).

The organisations maintaining the MIPs are **member organisations of On the Move**, the cultural mobility information network active in Europe and internationally.

Within the On the Move network, these organisations have formed a “MIPs working group” to:

- exchange views on administrative challenges on a regular basis,
- review their own information standards,
- share good practices,
- organise and prepare joint events and projects (information sessions, workshops, bilateral documents).

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This stands in line with one of the best practice tools mentioned in the above mentioned document Information Standards for the Mobility of Artists and Cultural Professionals: “Networking at European level is vital in ensuring that best practice in service provision is shared across Europe. This leads to increased knowledge and exchange of know-how on information on mobility between national information providers. Cooperation with other countries’ information services also ensures accurate and quality advice and information for outgoing artists and professionals, as well as mutual signposting.” (MIS, p. 6).

MIPs common features in short

MIPs share basic criteria concerning topics covered, quality guarantee, information provision and common values. However, each MIP has a specific structure and only offer certain services , as will be described below.

In terms of common features, all MIPs commit to:

- Free, accessible, accurate and reliable information and services about administrative matters related to mobility, covering at least one artistic discipline.
- Strong connection to the cultural field and a high level of awareness of the needs of the arts and cultural sector.
- Adapted information provision to the needs of the target group, through general information (websites, newsletters, workshops, factsheets,...) and/or individual consultation (emails, face-to-face meetings, phone calls, ...).
- Use of the national language plus the English language.
- Signposting to further resources, publications, or experts when necessary or relevant.
- Cooperation with other MIPs at an administrative level for the sharing of resources and information in European and international contexts.

Structures of MIPs

Each MIP is implemented in a (slightly or very) different way, influenced by different (national) political structures and debates, as well as subject to varying (financial) capacities and resources, and other specificities of the (national) context. In addition, the prior existence of other MIPs can serve as reference or best practice in the establishment of a MIP.

MIPs can be stand-alone organisations or be part of existing cultural organisations funded through public and/or local means.

For these reasons, MIPs are all different in terms of structure or organisation.

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Information Standards

Due to the different structures, contexts and (financial) capacities that MIPs face, the services of information provision and counselling they provide are different. These differences are specified as follows: the range of topics they cover, the scope of mobility (incoming; outgoing; short-term; long-term), service provision (website / individual consultation...), language provision, charges and fees, as well as the connection to and regular dialogue with legal experts and representatives of ministries or the like.

Despite these differences, a minimum set of basic criteria that MIPs have in common can be defined.

A definition of **basic criteria is presented below concerning the following: topics covered, information provision, quality guarantee, and common values.**

Furthermore, additional services that some MIPs offer/MIPs could ideally offer are introduced.

Topics covered by MIPs

The Information Standards for the Mobility of Artists and Cultural Professionals define 10 regulatory issues, which are essential for artists and cultural professionals when working across borders (visa/work and residence permits, employment/work legislation, social security, taxation, customs/transportation, intellectual property rights/data protection, health/safety, insurance, licences, and freedom of expression/privacy).

Furthermore, “opportunities” (programmes and schemes that support the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, as well as opportunities for finding work, cooperation or training) and “resources” (e.g. links to useful information sources, at European and national level), are named as information topics which are desirable and should be covered in a basic manner.

Regulatory issues that MIPs tackle are:

- visa/residence/labour market access
- status/contracts
- social security
- taxation
- customs/transport
- insurances
- copyright/licences

ALL MIPs provide detailed, customised, and accurate information on some of the issues listed above. ALL MIPs provide information on incoming and temporary mobility.

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MOST MIPs cover all of the issues listed above. **MOST MIPs** provide **information on opportunities and resources** in addition to the mobility information. **MOST MIPs** provide information on incoming and **long-term mobility**.

SOME MIPs provide information on **outgoing** mobility.

The information covers **at least one artistic discipline**. Some MIPs cover **all disciplines**.

Information provision

MIPs strive to make the **information provision as accessible as possible** for artists and cultural professionals who work internationally or wish to work internationally.

ALL MIPs provide information **online** via the website of the hosting organisation or via a stand-alone website. **ALL MIPs** strive to provide the information **as tailor-made as possible** for its respective target group. It is provided in the national language and in English. **ALL MIPs** provide all or some/basic services **free of charge**.

Signposting to other MIPs and/or other relevant and reliable information and consultation services is another important aspect of the information provision for all MIPs.

MOST MIPs provide information **via individual consultations** in person and/or by email and/or telephone.

SOME MIPs:

- provide information in publications and/or
- organise workshops on relevant topics and/or
- share news via newsletters and/or social media.

SOME MIPs offer additional services for reasonable fees (= significantly less than what a professional/expert on the “free market”/for-profit sector would charge).

Quality standards

ALL MIPs commit themselves to provide **accurate and up-to-date information**. Information is kept as up-to-date as possible (due to sometimes rapidly changing regulations, up-to-date information cannot always be provided immediately).

The staff of MIPs are legal experts themselves and/or are in contact with legal experts, delegates of administration and ministries as regularly as possible. Online information has been compiled/reviewed by experts on the individual topics.

ALL MIPs have **good connections to the cultural sector** to meet the needs of artists and cultural professionals.

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MOST MIPs offer **guidance** rather than counselling and/or legally binding advice. MIPs offer general information, tailor-made and case-specific, but do not offer support /accompaniment in legal cases.

SOME MIPs have established strategic partnerships with national/regional authorities and administrations.

Monitoring and evaluating information services

MOST MIPs evaluate their services by using quantitative queries, **SOME MIPs** by qualitative surveys.

MIPs strive to develop a more comprehensive framework of evaluation measures.

Common Values

MIPs believe that international mobility is an integral part of artistic and cultural practice and that it is crucial for cultural diversity, while sharing the criteria and values expressed in On the Move's Charter for a sustainable and responsible cultural mobility for cultural operators and other professionals practicing cultural mobility.

The charter addresses not only administrative aspects, but also social ecological aspects of cultural mobility.

MIPs strive to raise awareness on these issues among their target group.

In addition, MIPs strive to make their information as accessible as possible while considering the diversity of our society as well as the burdens some people/groups are facing due to discrimination.

Mediation & Advocacy

MIPs function as mediators between governments and artists/cultural professionals.

They raise awareness on administrative regulations that artists and cultural professionals are often not aware of but must comply with. MIPs translate official texts into a more understandable language targeted at the sector and offer easy-to-access guidance on complex issues.

In light of often vague guidance from official government sources, MIPs fill the gap between regulations artists/cultural professionals have to comply with and the lack of information provision by governments or professional consultation which artists/cultural professionals cannot afford.

Beyond the mediation work, the MIPs and their parent organisations aim to be important contributors to their country's cultural fabric, and are committed to leveraging their

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perspective, expertise, resources, and/or data to advocate for better conditions for artists and cultural professionals working internationally – together with other networks and organisations. This advocacy can take many forms, including but not limited to, advising policy makers, gathering field data, education, publishing research and guidance, organising stakeholder collective action, or litigation.

How to become a MIP?

The aim of the MIP working group is to establish/connect with potential MIPs within Europe (in unrepresented countries) and in other world regions (as is the case now with North America with a MIP in the USA) to expand the network.

To assist organisations in setting up a MIP, the MIP working group strives to compile basic recommendations on how to start and successfully implement services. Also, MIPs are open for consultations to discuss questions in detail and to accompany the process.

As mentioned above, MIPs are OTM members. Organisations that would like to become a MIP, but are not an OTM member, will be encouraged to become a member in order to join the working group. Also, the working group welcomes partners at any time (group members must agree to individual requests).

Steps to become a MIP:

- Join a working group meeting to exchange with peers and express interest.
- Apply to join OTM network if applicable
- In conversation with existing MIPs, develop a strategic plan to identify which topics the new MIP would cover and how information would be provided.
- Establish a website/webpage with basic information in the national language and English around the topics that will be covered and the services that will be offered.

The MIPs working group looks forward to receiving your requests by email: mip@on-the-move.org

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ANNEX

List of MIPs within On the Move, cultural mobility information network

Belgium: [Cultuurloket](#)

Czech Republic: [CzechMobility.Info](#) (hosted by Arts and Theatre Institute)

Finland: [Theatre Info Finland](#)

France: [MobiCulture](#)

Germany: [touring artists](#) (hosted by [IGBK](#), [ITI](#) and [DTD](#))

The Netherlands: [DutchCulture / TransArtists](#)

Portugal: [Loja Lisboa Cultura](#)

UK: [Arts Infopoint UK](#) (hosted by [Wales Arts International](#) with [Arts Council England](#), [Creative Scotland](#) and [Arts Council Northern Ireland](#))

USA: [Tamizdat](#)

Associated MIPs and guests

In order to encourage further organisations to become/set up a MIP (whether they are OTM members or not), the MIPs meetings are regularly open for these organisations/players to join and discuss issues concerning mobility as an associated MIP. Furthermore, to foster the exchange with organisations which are concerned with similar questions and issues as MIPs, working group meetings are open to guests and guest organisations in the sector (whether they are OTM members or not).

Associated MIPs (members of OTM), in the process of developing the features described above:

[Motovila](#) – Slovenia

[Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute](#) – Poland

[Theatre Union of the Russian Federation](#) – Russian Federation

[Scensverige/Swedish ITI](#) – Sweden

Guest organisations:

Examples for partner organisations are (in alphabetical order):

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European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

Hellenic Foundation for Culture – Greece

PEARLE* Live Performance Europe

International Federation of Actors (FIA)

International Federation of Musicians (FIM)