

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

CULTURAL
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT
SERIES

 **4/MAR/26**
ONLINE
SESSION

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ZMINA
RESILIENCE



BUILDING STRONG INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

— WITH

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IZOLYATSIYA
PLATFORM FOR CULTURAL INITIATIVES

**MALÝ
BERLÍN**
kulturné centrum

 Co-funded by
the European Union

ZMINA:Resilience is a cooperation between IZOLYATSIYA (UA), Malý Berlín (SK) with support of Trans Europe Halles (SE).

■ OBJECTIVES

1. Plan short-term and long-term partnerships strategies
2. Distinguish intentional partnership strategy from the "checkbox" trap — and explain why it matters for you and international donors
3. Find potential partners quickly using national registries, EU platforms, and sector networks
4. Evaluate new partners using concrete criteria: roles, red flags, and behavioral signals before you commit
5. Structure a new partnership so it looks credible in an application and functions during implementation
6. Build a long-term partnerships base through networks, strategic event attendance, and consistent representation
7. Manage active partnerships — governance, communication, cooperation agreements, and financial flows and more

■ ABOUT US

Michal Klembara is a cultural manager and director of the cultural centre Malý Berlín in Trnava, Slovakia. He works on development of independent culture, civil society, and international cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. He served seven years as Chair of Anténa – the Slovak network for independent culture, and since 2023 has been a member of the Board of Directors of European cultural network Trans Europe Halles. He has extensive experience in advocacy, policy development, and strategic planning at local and regional levels.

Since 2010, **Mykhailo Glubokyi** has participated in the creation and development of the IZOLYATSIA foundation based in Ukraine. He has also played a leading role in the creation of projects and building partnerships with local and international partners. He represents IZOLYATSIA in various international networks, including Trans Europe Halles and European Creative Hubs Network. He is a consultant to the Trans Europe Halles network on the development of cooperation and support of organisations from Eastern Europe.



■ WHY PARTNERSHIPS

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WHY DO YOU NEED AN
INTERNATIONAL
PARTNER?

WHY PARTNERSHIPS

RANDOM / PROJECT-BASED

- One project
- Task-focused
- Short-term
- Formal relationship
- Easy to start

STRATEGIC

- Multiple collaborations
- Vision-focused
- Long-term
- Relational + strategic
- Slow to build

WHY PARTNERSHIPS

WHAT RANDOM/PROJECT-BASED PARTNERSHIPS LOOK LIKE:

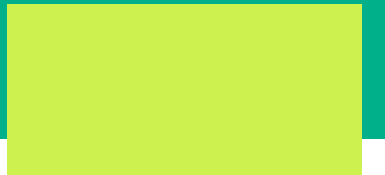
- One-off; driven by funder geography requirements or mass cold-outreach
- Partner is filling a slot; project addresses the leader's needs, not the partner's
- Organizations spend years on projects that don't develop them
- Partner organization is used as a space provider in other country and doesn't do anything else in the project

■ WHY PARTNERSHIPS

FROM PROJECT EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE

- Applications in Creative Europe, Erasmus+, and similar programs are reviewed carefully for whether partners have worked together before, whether trust exists, and whether the team has a track record
- Consortia with shared history score significantly higher
- Erasmus+ in particular is notorious for "spam" partnership-building: mass cold emails to hundreds of organizations, random consortia, frequent failures in implementation

WHY PARTNERSHIPS



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SHORT-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

- **FUNDING AND TENDERS PORTAL** (EU) — post a partner search listing immediately; hundreds of organizations browse simultaneously during active calls; post your profile even before a competition opens
- **YOUR SECTOR'S EVENTS** — attendee lists, residency alumni, workshop participants
- **HOUSE OF EUROPE, UCF, ZMINA award registries** — already-vetted organizations in your field
- **ON THE MOVE** — aggregator for international residencies, events, open calls across sectors; monitor it regularly
- **ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE WORK YOU ALREADY FOLLOW** — you know their output and values before you reach out; approach from a position of genuine familiarity
- **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PEOPLE YOU TRUST** — the fastest and most reliable; always ask your network first
- **NETWORKS & PLATFORMS, CREATIVE EUROPE DESKS**

PARTNER ROLES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	KEY RISK
Coordinator / Main Applicant	Submits application; legally and financially responsible for the entire project and all partners	Must be prepared to implement the project alone if partners drop out
Co-Applicant	Equal consortium member; shares implementation; receives a budget share	Must be operationally capable; a weak co-applicant damages the whole project
Associated Partner	Contributes positively; counted as beneficiary; no budget share	Often used for organizations that add legitimacy but have limited capacity
Subcontractor / Third Party	Provides specific services (website, some comms, logistics) the team cannot cover internally	Cannot administer the core project; amounts must be small; cannot be a workaround

RED FLAGS

Often motivated by the bonus points, not genuine project fit. One real case: a partnership entered with such an organization led to three years of difficulty and nearly ended in litigation.

THEY AGREE TO EVERYTHING WITHOUT QUESTION

— This signals the partner does not understand the project specifics and will likely disappear during implementation. **Contrast:** A partner who asks hard questions — about budget, timeline, role definition, contingencies — is a good sign. It shows they understand the work and feel real responsibility.

THEY DISAPPEAR DURING APPLICATION PREPARATION

— if they miss planning meetings or forget scheduled calls before submission, they will be worse during implementation. This is the clearest behavioral predictor available. Part ways politely.

NO GRANT TRACK RECORD OR PORTFOLIO

— acceptable if individual team members have strong personal experience from previous organizations; unacceptable if the whole team is new to grant management.

RED FLAGS

BUDGET DEMANDS DISPROPORTIONATE TO THEIR CONTRIBUTION

— e.g., offering a venue and requesting 40% of the total budget.

VAGUE ROLE LANGUAGE

— "will support," "will assist" without specific deliverables. Every role must be in writing with bullet-pointed obligations. Use a Memorandum of Cooperation.

+ ADDING YOUR ORGANIZATION TO AN APPLICATION WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT

— this caused a wave of disqualifications in a recent Creative Europe round. Organizations found their PIC numbers (EU registration codes) listed in applications they had never agreed to. The European Commission is addressing this; Culture Action Europe is lobbying for systemic changes. *If you discover this has happened to you, contact Culture Action Europe immediately.*

CREDIBLE AND FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

WRITE A MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION (MoC)

EACH PARTNER'S ROLE: bullet-pointed, specific deliverables — not "will support"

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: consensus, vote, or lead organization has final say — write it down explicitly

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL: meeting cadence, platform, language

EXIT CLAUSE: what happens if one partner cannot continue

BUDGET SPLIT RATIONALE: why each partner receives what they receive

CREDIBLE AND FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

DO AT LEAST ONE SMALL JOINT TASK BEFORE SUBMITTING

- Co-write a section of the application together
- Produce one shared document
- Run one planning call and follow up with shared notes

CREDIBLE AND FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

AGREE EXPLICITLY ON VISIBILITY AND CREDIT

- Who gets named where in communications
- How financial reporting works between partners

CREDIBLE AND FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

CHECK ELIGIBILITY TOGETHER BEFORE INVESTING TIME

- All organizations in Creative Europe-eligible countries
- All have the required legal status for the specific call
- All organizations have required active years
- No active audit or compliance issue at any partner

CREDIBLE AND FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

DURING IMPLEMENTATION — SET THIS UP BEFORE YOU START

- Regular coordination calls (monthly or bi-monthly)
- Shared project communication and management tool (Slack, Notion, Trello, or equivalent)
- Designated contact person per partner and work package
- Mid-project check-in that explicitly asks: Are roles still fair? Is anyone falling behind? Does anything need to be renegotiated?

■ EXERCISE: ELEVATOR PITCH



Each participant (or team) writes in the chat:

WHO YOU ARE — organization name, city, sector, focus area

YOUR TRACK RECORD — concrete numbers: projects implemented, budgets managed, partnerships formed, audiences reached

WHAT YOU OFFER — your specific added value; the role you can take in the consortium

WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR — type of partner, sector, preferred country, and why you are approaching them specifically

CALL TO ACTION — *"Would you be interested in speaking for 10–15 minutes?"*

BREAK TIME

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LET'S TAKE 5



LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP

- Multiple collaborations
- Vision-focused
- Long-term
- Relational + strategic
- Slow to build

LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP

- Growing a Partnership Slowly
- Start with small collaborations
- Clear but light structure
- Observe working culture
- Build trust through delivery
- Only later → bigger commitments

LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP

THE INVISIBLE SIDE OF PARTNERSHIPS

- Having someone to call
- Emotional support in crises
- Practical trust (money transfers, logistics, admin help)
- Knowing how the other organisation *thinks*

MALÝ BERLÍN AND IZOLYATSIA

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TIMELINE:

- 2016 — First contact
- 2017 — First collaboration film screenings
- 2017 — IZOLYATSIA hosts a Trans Europe Halls meeting in Kyiv
- 2019 — Exhibition of a Slovak artist at IZONE (IZOLYATSIA's venue)
- 2019 — Trans Europe Halles East Hub
- 2022 — V4 project on communist heritage in the region
- 2022 — Re-Source Ukraine!
- 2023 — ZMINA: Rebuilding
- 2025 — CASCADE
- 2025 — ZMINA: Resilience

MALÝ BERLÍN AND IZOLYATSIA

EXTRACTED LESSONS:

- The first collaboration was chosen for low cost and low risk — it required almost nothing from IZOLYATSIA but created a positive shared experience
- They met repeatedly in the same network context over years — the relationship compounded
- Each subsequent collaboration was larger than the last, reflecting the trust that had accumulated
- By the time they led a major EU project together, they had a four-year track record and knew how each other worked under pressure

KEY TACTICAL ADVICE FOR ANY CONFERENCE OR NETWORK EVENT:

- Have a plan before you arrive: know which organizations you want to talk to, and why
- Be specific about what you want from each conversation: one proposition, one ask, not your entire org biography
- Pitch yourself in one sentence: write it down before the event, especially if you find networking difficult in person
- Have an English-language website, even if only the basic/static part, potential partners will Google you during or immediately after the conversation; a Cyrillic-only or outdated site loses the opportunity on the spot
- Continuity of representation: if resources are limited, send the same person to the same network repeatedly; someone who attends the same meeting three years in a row becomes a recognized face; rotating attendees resets this to zero each time

NETWORKS

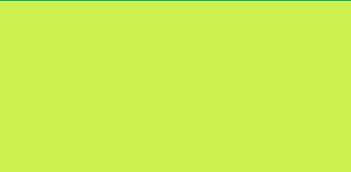
BY ORGANIZATIONAL TYPE — join networks whose members are most similar to your organization. Cohesion is high; partnership potential is immediate. Example: Trans Europe Halls, a network of independent cultural centers in repurposed/industrial spaces.

BY TOPIC — if you have a strong thematic focus, join topic-based networks (cultural heritage, environmental issues, gender equity, community development, advocacy) — including networks outside the strictly cultural frame, in civil society and adjacent sectors.

A PRACTICAL NOTE ON MEMBERSHIP: You do not have to be a formal member to attend. Many networks have open or observer categories.

GLOBAL VS. REGIONAL: Global networks like Res Artis (residencies) offer broad visibility, but their meetings happen across continents — harder to maintain the regular in-person contact that actually builds relationships. Regional networks (European-focused or regional) are more practical for partnership development.

NETWORKS



NAME	FOCUS	NOTE
Trans Europe Halles	Independent cultural centers in repurposed/industrial buildings	Founded 1984; large, experienced; has a member directory. This is how MB + IZO met.
European Creative Hubs Network	Creative hubs; creative industries	Broader commercial-adjacent focus
Reset!	Music venues, nightlife, media culture	Relevant for music/night culture orgs
Culture Action Europe	Cross-sectoral advocacy in EU cultural policy	Essential for staying current on policy and program changes; currently tracking Creative Europe disqualification crisis
Res Artis	International artist residencies	Global scope; visibility but less regular face-to-face
On the Move	Mobility, residencies, international artistic work	Strong aggregator; global beyond EU
International network for contemporary performing arts (IETM)	Advocate the value of the arts and culture and empower performing arts professionals through access to international connections, knowledge and a dynamic forum for exchange	
The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)	Cultural centers and organizations	

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE, MAINTENANCE, AND FINANCIAL FLOWS

Roles and decision-making

Cooperation agreements

Communication between projects

Risk management

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE, MAINTENANCE, AND FINANCIAL FLOWS

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk sections in grant applications are commonly treated as box-ticking exercises. Some funders (e.g., Swedish Institute) explicitly require serious risk assessment.

Recommendation: At the kickoff meeting, hold a dedicated one-to-two hour session with all partners specifically to discuss what could go wrong and what mitigation measures exist — even independently of what was written in the application. This session builds shared ownership of the project's risks.

Mid-project consortium changes (removing a failing partner) are common and EU agencies are accustomed to them. The decision-making procedure agreed at the start is what makes this manageable.

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE, MAINTENANCE, AND FINANCIAL FLOWS

After February 2022, the Ukrainian National Bank imposed strict restrictions on international payments to prevent capital flight. This made it nearly impossible for IZOLYATSIA to pay international collaborators, freelancers, or residency artists.

Additional complication: Ukraine does not recognize Kosovo, making payments to Kosovo-based individuals legally impossible.

SOLUTION, USED IN THE MB + IZO PROJECTS: With formal approval from the funders (European Commission, Swedish Institute, Visegrad Fund), IZOLYATSIA channeled payments through Malý Berlín — either by transferring funds to MB who then paid participants, or by pre-agreeing that donor funds would sit in MB budget and be disbursed on IZOLYATSIA's behalf, with full audit trail, contracts, and documentation.

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE, MAINTENANCE, AND FINANCIAL FLOWS

[List of Trans Europe Halles member organizations](#)
[Creative Europe — database of supported projects](#)
[Find a partner with Creative Europe Desk Ukraine](#)
[List of existing network and platforms that can help find partners](#)
[List of international residencies of Transartis](#)
[List of international residencies of Resartis](#)
[List of organizations working with international mobility On-the-move](#)
[List of ZMINA:Rebuilding projects](#)

+ ZMINA Networking Sessions

FIRST CONTACT: HOW TO APPROACH A NEW PARTNER

CLEAN UP SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE — this is your digital business card; an account with no posts for two years is a red flag for contacts

PREPARE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MATERIALS — at minimum: a one-pager with organization description, team bios, and project idea; or at least an English-language section of your website

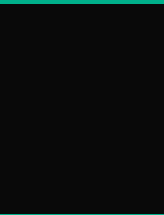
ENTER THROUGH A RECOMMENDATION WHENEVER POSSIBLE — ask your network for introductions

RESEARCH THE TARGET ORGANIZATION'S WORK BEFORE CONTACTING THEM — reference something specific; show you've done your homework

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT FROM THIS SPECIFIC PARTNER — not "I want to go to Germany" but a specific proposition tied to their actual work

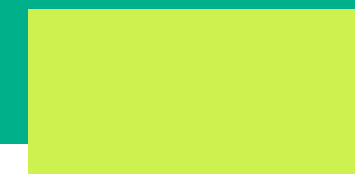
REFERENCE projects, networks, or collaborators you share with the target's world

REFRAME WAR CONDITIONS AS A STRENGTH — resilience, improvisation under pressure, and crisis management are real assets; present them as such, don't apologize for them



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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ASK YOUR QUESTIONS!