



CULTURE MOVES AFRICA

Case study: **NIGER**



DECONFINING
Arts, Culture & Policies
in Europe & Africa



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HOW TO GET THE MOST
OUT OF THE LITTLE?
SMART MOBILITY
FINANCING PRACTICES



Preface

Artistic mobility in Africa is often narrated through its shortcomings: refused visas, insufficient funding, limited infrastructure, and overly restrictive borders. This narrative, widely documented, has highlighted very real obstacles. But by dint of being repeated, it obscures the local practices and institutional ingenuity that emerge precisely in the most constrained contexts.

The dominant discourse presents support for artistic mobility and culture in most African countries as virtually non-existent, suggesting that the only solution would be increased support from international operators. This reading, although widespread, deserves to be nuanced.

Through the work of Culture Funding Watch and the African Mobility Info Point platform, this series of publications aims to renew the narrative, anchoring it in African reality and valuing effective local solutions. The aim is to take a fair and constructive look at existing public and private initiatives.

In this first case study dedicated to Niger, the facts are put into context. Even though it ranks among the lowest in certain United Nations indicators, the country continues to allocate a budget—admittedly modest, but real—to culture. This reality, often absent from dominant analyses, invites careful consideration of existing forms of engagement, their limits, and their potential.

The proposed reflection is part of a resolutely constructive approach. It acknowledges the limitations of the system, examines structural challenges, and highlights effective practices, some of which are discreet but significant. The aim is to enrich the debate, fuel collective reflection, and contribute to identifying solutions adapted to African realities.

A key question arises: how can effective, equitable, and sustainable artistic mobility mechanisms be developed in contexts marked by high demand, limited resources, and significant logistical constraints? In other words, how can the available resources be used to best effect?

As Plato reminded us, necessity is the mother of invention. Niger, like other countries in the region, has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for resilience and innovation in the face of difficulties and a lack of resources. From this reality have emerged mechanisms for supporting mobility which, although widely practiced, have rarely attracted the attention of studies devoted to artistic mobility on the continent. Where Niger particularly stands out is in the gradual structuring of these mechanisms.

This case study analyzes the experience of the l'Agence pour la Promotion des Entreprises et Industries Culturelles (APEIC) in supporting the mobility of cultural actors: mechanisms, results, impact, constraints encountered, and prospects for improvement.

It also explores the potential for scaling up and transferring this model to other African cultural ecosystems, thus providing a concrete example of African solutions for Africa.

Ouafa Belgacem
CEO Culture Funding Watch

Culture Funding Watch (CFW) is a sustainable resource mobilization platform dedicated to creators from the Global South. Its mission is to support art and culture practitioners and professionals in accessing resources, while working for sustainable, transparent, and intelligent financing of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs).

CFW strengthens the capacities of CCIs through three pillars: access, knowledge, and community. By facilitating access to information, data, and resources, strengthening skills, and conducting research and advocacy activities on culture financing, CFW plays a strategic mediating role. The organization thus ensures the promotion of the sector and connects artists, policymakers, as well as cultural managers and entrepreneurs to the resources necessary to increase their impact and ensure their growth.

<https://culturefundingwatch.com>

DECONFINING DECONFINING is a four-year EU-funded project, bringing together cultural practitioners, artists, policymakers, and audiences from two continents – Europe and Africa. Dedicated to contributing to a better understanding of modes of confinement (social, political, and economic) from different points of view, the project aims to explore and develop new forms of intercontinental artistic and cultural cooperation (and in terms of cultural policies), as well as to offer better access and information for intercontinental mobility and co-creation.

<http://deconfining.eu>

Editors : Ouafa Belgacem
Researchers and contributors : Maki Garba , Ouafa Belgacem
Coordinators : Ouafa Belgacem , Rania Tarhouni
Graphic design and layout : Slim Ben chiekh

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I. Introduction & Context

Artistic mobility is now widely recognized in Africa as a fundamental lever for the development of cultural and creative industries. As emphasized in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, mobility is the foundation of continental integration.

«Cultural cooperation between Member States shall be based on the free movement of cultural actors and the exchange of cultural goods and services, in order to strengthen mutual understanding, fraternity, and continental integration. « (Article 27 of the preamble).

Beyond the simple physical movement from one point to another, mobility represents a structuring process that encompasses artistic exchanges, participation in cultural events, professional training, networking, international visibility, and openness to new markets.

In the context of Niger—a landlocked country characterized by great cultural diversity but whose cultural and creative industries face logistical, financial, and institutional challenges—facilitating the mobility of artists and cultural actors is particularly important. Mobility thus becomes an essential tool for overcoming infrastructure constraints, accessing regional and international creative and distribution opportunities, boosting often underfunded cultural sectors, and strengthening Niger’s presence on the African arts scene.

As part of its mission to support Nigerien cultural actors, the APEIC (Agence de Promotion des Entreprises et Industries Culturelles) has set up a smart system guided by the principles of resource maximization. Designed to meet growing demand since 2012, this system is based on a mix of financial and in-kind support enabling artists, troupes, promoters, and cultural institutions to travel both within the country and abroad.

1. AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH: INVESTMENT RATHER THAN EXPENDITURE

Thanks to this initiative, APEIC has undergone a major paradigm shift. Rather than sticking to the traditional reflex of budgetary consumption—often limited to one-off and precarious subsidies—the organization has opted for this hybrid approach. This strategy combines financial support with in-kind assistance, transforming available resources into sustainable investments.

A concrete illustration of this vision is the acquisition of a fleet of vehicles consisting of a minibus and a Toyota Hilux 4x4. These are made available to operators in the cultural and creative industries (CCI) through a selection process. Now, instead of applying for funds for expensive plane tickets, artists and operators can apply to use these vehicles for the duration of their mission, thus optimizing the impact of every franc invested.

Much more than just intelligent optimization of limited resources, this approach also innovates by promoting green mobility, favoring shared ground transportation over carbon-intensive air travel.

By combining efficiency, sustainability, and resource optimization, APEIC offers an innovative model that is adapted to the realities not only of Niger but also of the sub-region, while encouraging more responsible and sustainable mobility practices.

Through this mechanism, beneficiaries also have support for the development of promotional tools for their mobility projects and their local and international activities.

Initially, the vehicles were intended to be rented to artists and promoters, whether their activities took place in Niger or abroad.

However, given the limited financial resources of the beneficiaries, APEIC most often adopts a flexible approach, the vehicles are made available almost free of charge, and the organizers bear the costs related to fuel as well as the driver's per diem. This model makes it possible to support a larger number of initiatives.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The program is aimed at a diverse group of cultural actors representing the main sectors of Niger's cultural and creative industries. The Agency officially covers five (5) priority sectors, which constitute the core of its intervention:

- Music and performing arts
- Cinema and audiovisual
- Visual arts
- Fashion and design
- Books and publishing

3. GOVERNANCE AND SELECTION PROCESS

The APEIC support mechanism is based on an open and continuous selection process, allowing cultural actors to submit their applications at any time of the year. In order to ensure efficient management of limited resources, the allocation of aid follows a validation circuit, articulated around four (4) key stages:

- Reception and administrative orientation

Each request is officially registered by the secretariat, then transmitted to the Administrative Directorate. The latter ensures that the file is routed to the competent technical directorate, depending on the specific nature of the proposed activity.

- Technical evaluation and compliance

The technical directorate carries out an in-depth analysis of the file along two axes:

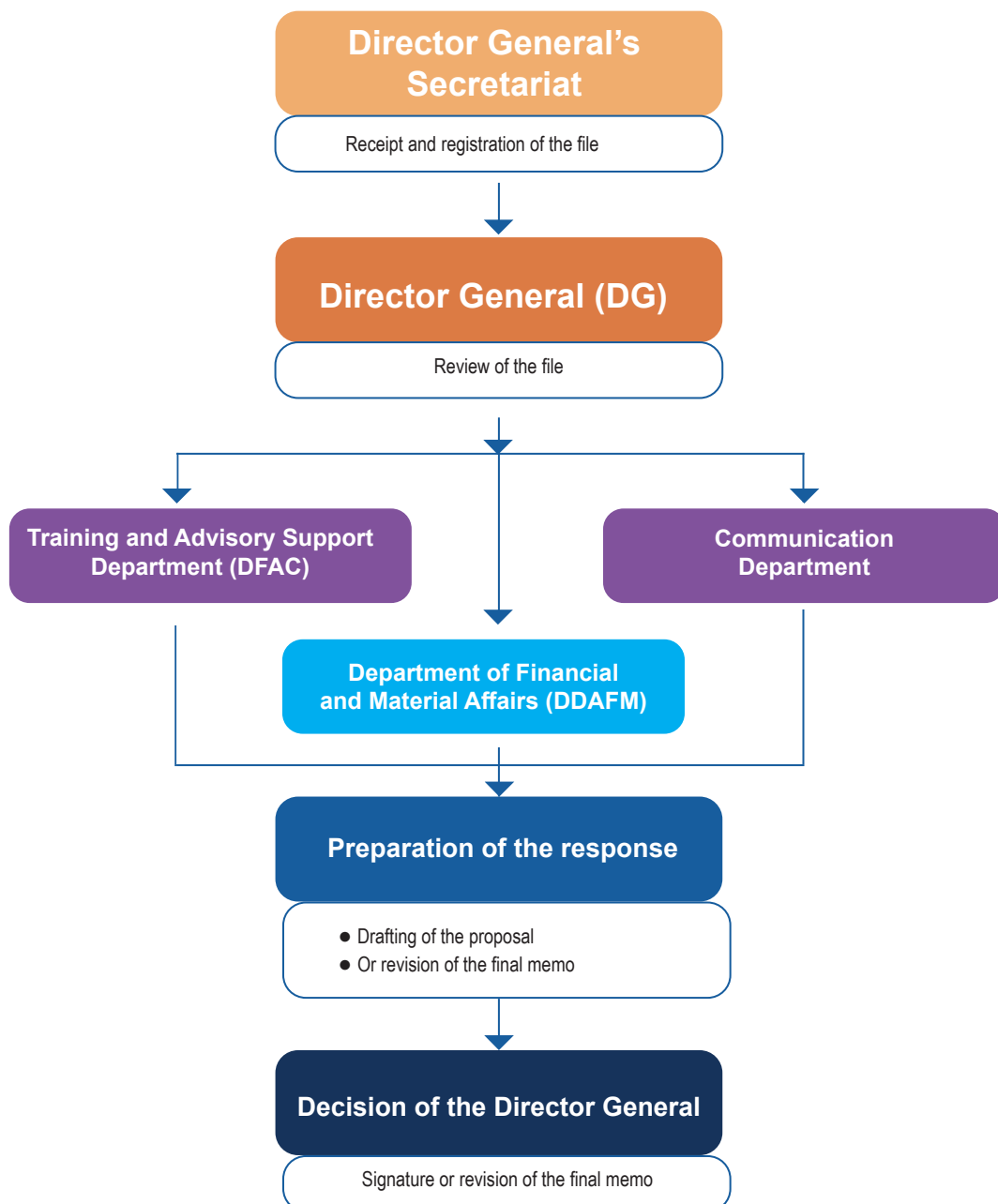
- **Regulatory compliance:** Verification of the applicant's eligibility (in particular, holding a professional license).
- **Strategic relevance :** Evaluation of the artistic, cultural, or institutional interest of the project, as well as its coherence with the missions of APEIC.

- Arbitration and final validation

Files that have received a favorable technical evaluation are submitted to the Director General, who has the final decision-making authority. At this stage, final decisions are made regarding:

- The mode of intervention (financial support or provision of vehicles);
- The level of support and the possible conditions of participation of the beneficiary.

Diagram N°1: internal process for managing mobility requests



II. Evolution and performance

1. A DYNAMIC IN FULL EXPANSION (2019 – 2025)

Since its creation, this mechanism has benefited 22 missions over the years 2019 - 2025 and was requested for a period of 137 days between 2019 -2024.

Table N°1: Mobility programs (2019-2024)

Year	Number of Mobilities	- Number of Days
2019	1	6
2020	0	0
2021	2	20
2022	3	29
2023	1	8
2024	11	74
2025	5	-
Total	22	137

The APEIC’s analysis of support for international mobility reveals a trajectory in three distinct phases: initiation, resilience in the face of the health crisis, and a current phase of strategic expansion.

2019-2020: The test of the health crisis. After a promising start in 2019, momentum was halted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of borders and the cancellation of global festivals resulted in a blank year, marking a complete halt in travel.

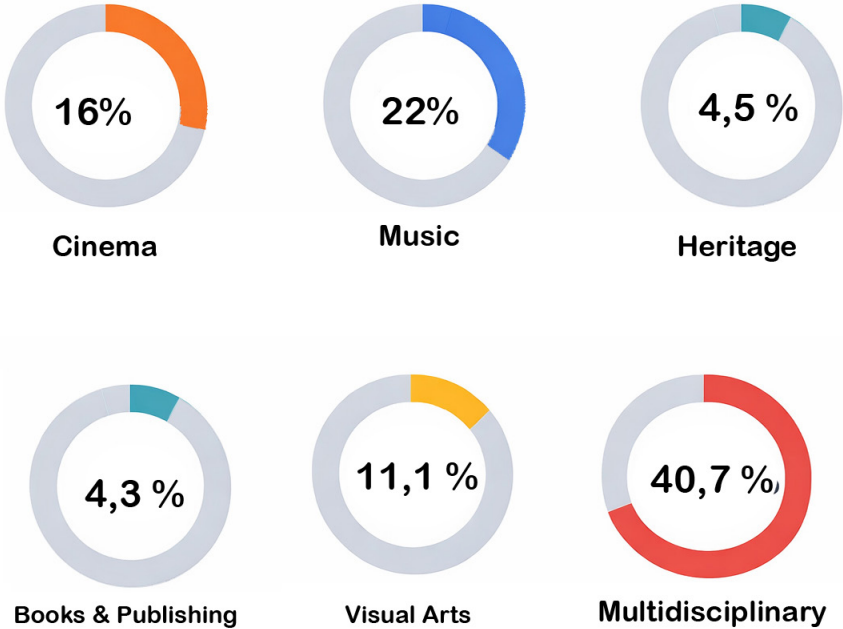
2021-2023: A gradual reactivation. The recovery has been cautious, with two programs in 2021 and three in 2022. Despite a slight decline in 2023 (one program) due to regional logistical and security constraints, the program has proven its resilience.

2024: The major turning point. The year 2024 saw unprecedented growth with 11 mobility programs, demonstrating strong recognition of the scheme. This exceptional increase confirms APEIC’s operational capacity to meet the growing demand, particularly in the context of South-South cooperation.

2025: Towards sustainable consolidation. With 5 programs already at the halfway point, the year 2025 was part of this growth dynamic.

2. Distribution by sector

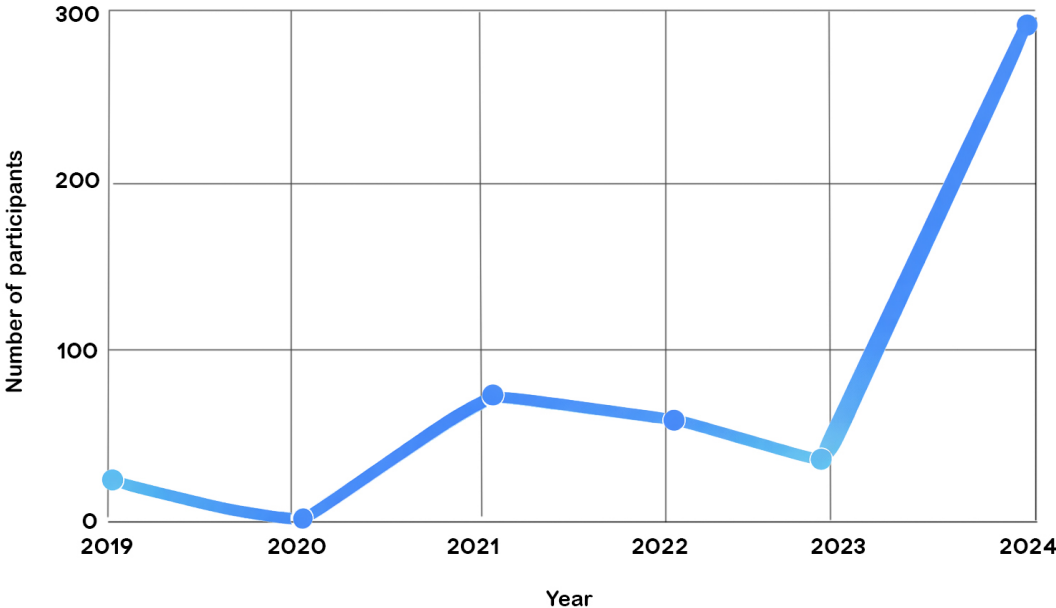
Graph N° 1: Main cultural sector (2019 - 2025)



This breakdown confirms the inclusive and cross-sectoral nature of the APEIC mobility program, while highlighting areas for improvement in terms of achieving a better balance between cultural sectors..

3. Number of beneficiaries

Graph N° 2: Number of beneficiaries between 2019 - 2024



The graph highlights a contrasting but overall upward trend in the number of participants in mobility programs between 2019 and 2024. After a moderate level in 2019 (12 participants), 2020 marked a complete break with no participants, a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the halt in cultural mobility.

From 2021 onwards, there was a significant recovery with 73 participants, confirming the gradual revival of cultural activities and artistic exchanges. This momentum continued in 2022, despite a slight decline (58 participants), before experiencing a temporary slowdown in 2023 (16 participants).

The year 2024 marks a major turning point, with an exceptional increase reaching 296 participants. This spectacular growth reflects both the intensification of demand and the rise of the APEIC mobility program and its increased capacity to support a larger number of cultural actors.

III. Performances

The analysis of beneficiaries highlights several characteristics that reflect strengths and challenges. Among the most obvious are :

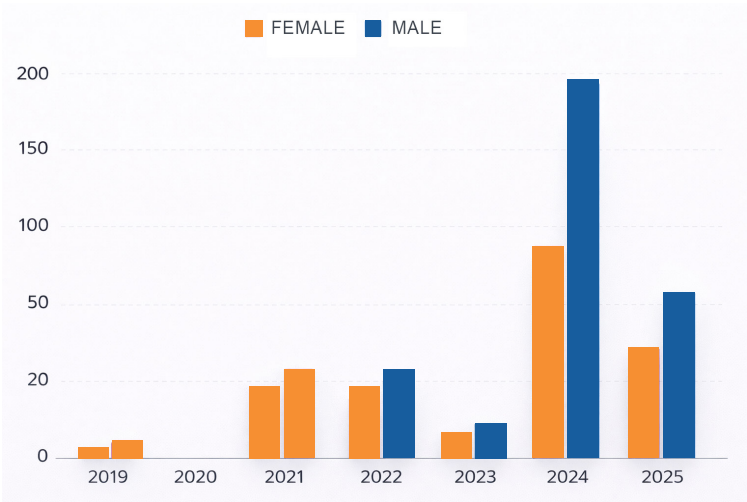
1. Centralization :

concentration of requests and support in Niamey, the capital, which can be explained by several factors:

- the high concentration of cultural structures in Niamey;
- the presence of institutions, festivals, cultural centers, and specialized schools;
- lower logistical costs for actors based in the capital;
- administrative proximity to APEIC.

2. Dominance of male participation:

Graph N°3: Gender distribution (2019 - 2025)



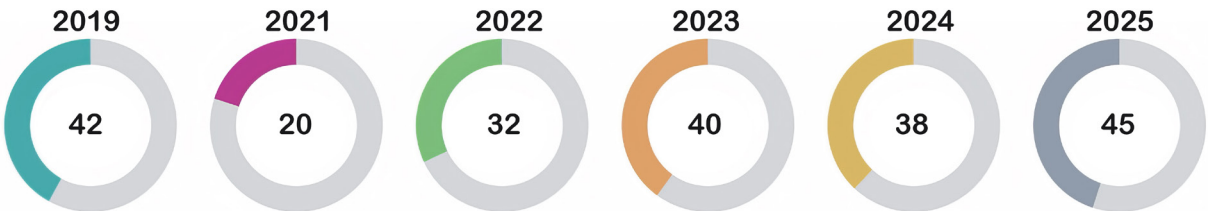
1, the year 2020, with no mobility, reflects the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The trend is particularly marked in 2024, a year of significantly increased mobility, with 194 male beneficiaries compared to 102 female beneficiaries.

These figures highlight both the inclusive nature of the program and the need to strengthen targeted actions to promote women’s access to artistic mobility.

3. Support mainly oriented towards confirmed artists and cultural operators:

Graph N°4: average age of beneficiaries (2019–2025)



Since its inception, the fund has had an average beneficiary age of 41, reflecting support that is mainly directed towards artists and cultural operators who already have established careers and are often involved in tours, regional festivals, or international performance projects.

A notable break appears in 2021 and 2022, with a significantly lower average age (21 in 2021 and 32.2 in 2022). This decrease can be explained by the scheme’s increased orientation towards young beneficiaries, particularly in the context of artistic initiation activities, participation in competitions, local festivals, and/or educational activities.

From 2023 to 2025, the average age constantly rises again, respectively to 40 years in 2023, 37.75 years in 2024, and 43.8 in 2025, years during which the mechanism mainly supported mobility related to international festivals, artistic tours, institutional events, and structuring projects, mobilizing more experienced actors.

4. A preference for short and MEDIUM-term mobility:

Most of the travel supported by APEIC extends between 8 and 12 days, representing 64.7% of the total missions, mainly for participation in:

- Festivals,
- Cultural workshops,
- Limited artistic tours,
- One-off events (assemblies, professional meetings, temporary exhibitions).

5. More national than international mobility:

Tableau N°2: Geographical Distribution of Mobility

	Country	Count
International Mobility	Mali	1
	Burkina Faso	1
	Benin	1
	Nigeria	1
	Togo	1
National Mobility	Niger	16
TOTAL —		22

The data show that national mobility occupies an important place in APEIC’s actions. The focus is on rotating cultural festivals which are one of the major frameworks for the celebration and promotion of Niger’s cultural heritage.

Each year, a different region of the country hosts the National Day Celebration on December 18, bringing together artists, troupes, regional authorities, and cultural structures. In this context, APEIC plays an essential role in facilitating the transport of delegations and cultural actors to celebrations’ host cities, which are often remote and difficult to access.

They also highlight the Agency’s ability to support large-scale national events, but also the need to strengthen logistical resources to meet a growing demand both in other regions of the country and internationally.

The countries concerned by international mobility are located in West Africa, namely :

- Mali (2019)
- Burkina Faso (2022 et 2024)
- Benin (2023)
- Nigeria (2024)
- Togo (2025)

This geographical distribution highlights several structural elements. On the one hand, it reflects a clear regional and south-south orientation, favoring mobility to neighboring or nearby countries, given that the means of transport offered is land-based. On the other hand, it underlines the importance of major regional cultural events (festivals, fairs, professional gatherings) as the main drivers of international travel.

The repeated presence of Burkina Faso and Nigeria can be explained in particular by the attractiveness of major events such as FESPACO and FILO, which are essential platforms for visibility, competition, and networking for Nigerien artists. Mobility to Mali, Benin, and Togo reflects the intensification of regional cultural exchanges and the desire to strengthen South-South cooperation.

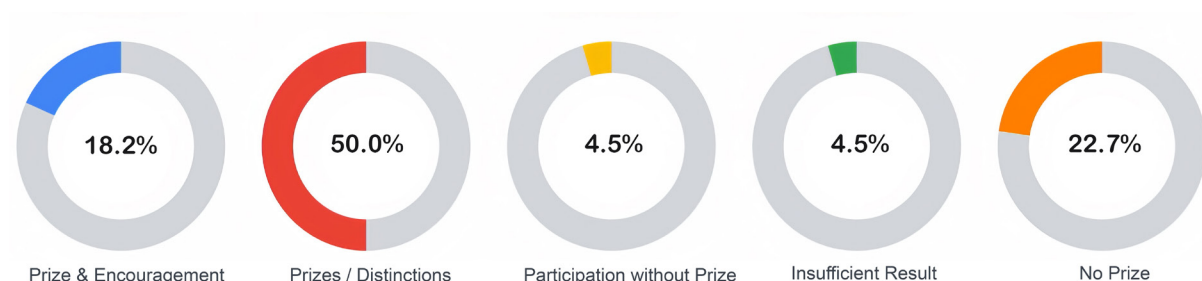
Thus, these data also highlight the contribution of this mobility to the regional integration of Nigerien cultural industries, by facilitating the circulation of artists, works, and expertise within West Africa, while remaining consistent with the logistical, security, and budgetary constraints of the Nigerien context.

IV. Impact

In addition to its innovative aspect, the fund stands out for the performance of its MEAL system. By highlighting, through data collection, the correlation between support for mobility and the positive impact on the careers of cultural actors, the agency proves the effectiveness of its action and provides solid arguments for advocacy.

This approach serves as a true benchmark for the development of the cultural sector at the national and regional levels.

Graph N°5: Prizes, recognitions, and other achievements



The results reported by beneficiaries of the APEIC mobility program highlight its success: 68% of trips result in the recipient winning a prize, trophy, or distinction.

This large majority of mobility projects leading to formal recognition reinforces the argument that the Agency's support contributes directly to the visibility, competitiveness, and promotion of Nigerien talent on the international stage.

These examples demonstrate:

- the diversification of beneficiaries (cinema, music, humor, public speaking, cultural fairs, etc.)
- the regional and international scope of the mechanism (Nigeria, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso);
- the direct contribution of mobility to Nigerian participation in major festivals on the continent;
- the impact on visibility, professionalization, and cultural cooperation.

The vehicles appear to be a strategic tools that have enabled essential mobility, despite the Agency's material and financial limitations.

V. Some Examples of Mobility

SUPPORT FOR MEETINGS, ASSEMBLIES, AND NATIONAL EVENTS FICNI: Fair of Cultural Enterprises and Industries of Niger

Through its institutional and financial support, the Agency has enabled dozens of start-ups, artisans, and cultural entrepreneurs from all regions of the country to showcase their expertise at FICNI, «a strategic platform dedicated to promoting ‘Consommer Nigérien’ (Consume Nigerien).

This support has fostered networking between creators and potential investors, thereby strengthening the economic structuring of the sector and the visibility of Nigerien cultural products on the national and sub-regional market.

RIRE Festival (Rencontres Internationales du Rire) – 6th edition



Support via the minibus which facilitated the participation in the organization of the 6th Edition of the “Rencontres Internationales du Rire” in Niamey of the comedian IRO.

Support for International Meetings Participation in FESPACO (Ouagadougou) – 2023

APEIC has on several occasions supported the participation of a delegation of directors, producers, and cultural actors at FESPACO, a major event in African cinema. This support has strengthened the Nigerian presence in official competitions and in professional meetings, contributing to the recognition of national cinema on the international scene.



Participation in the 18th edition of the Ouagadougou International Book Fair (FILO) (November 25–30, 2025 Ouaga)



APEIC supported the participation of delegations of Nigerien writers at FILO (Ouagadougou International Book Fair) in Burkina Faso, thereby promoting Nigerien literature within the Sahel region. On the occasion of the 18th edition of FILO, the fund supported the participation of stakeholders in Niger’s book industry.

In total, at least 15 writers and publishers, including executives, took part in FILO 2025 in Ouagadougou.

VI. Challenges and perspectives

1. Challenges

While this artistic mobility program in Niger has demonstrated its positive impact on the cultural and professional development of artists, its consolidation requires concerted action to address:

- **Significant pressure on resources:** The intensive mobilization of logistical resources, limited to two vehicles, is threatened by the continuous growth of the Nigerien cultural sector's needs.
- **Financial dependence:** Public funding is the only source of guaranteed income, which makes the program vulnerable to budgetary and political uncertainties.
- **Constant arbitration:** The number of requests far exceeds the available resources, imposing a rigorous and often difficult selection

2. PERSPECTIVES

The structuring of this experience will have to be done on three main axes: strengthening its structures, diversifying its funding, and expanding its capacities.

Strengthen support

Further structure support for mobility by professionalizing support, moving from simple logistical support to a genuine strategic support service. This involves coupling the provision of vehicles with technical assistance enabling beneficiaries to transform each trip into a multidimensional mission.

Beyond the primary objective of representation (participation in a festival or event), the Agency could support cultural actors in structuring an optimized mobility plan, including prospecting for new partnerships, seeking funding from local donors, and actively promoting their work.

By positioning itself as a strategic advisor and a network facilitator, the Agency will maximize the lasting impact of each mission on the careers of artists and the growth of CCIs.

Territorial equity

Ensure a better balance between different regions to better serve the entire country by facilitating access to logistical and financial resources for talent from different regions of Niger.

By strengthening the fund's proximity to regional cultural centers, the fund will be able to guarantee inclusive representation and enable every cultural actor, regardless of their location, to benefit from the same opportunities for national and international exposure.

Balancing beneficiary profiles:

Ensure a better balance between support for emerging young talent and that for mid-career artists. There is a need for a rebalancing the ratio between young artists and professionals at the beginning or middle of their careers. Mobility should be seen as a tool for long-term career development, promoting innovative international collaborations and contributing to cultural diversity on a global scale.

Another major area for improvement is the balance between the sexes. The Agency should increase the participation of women in its mobility program to correct the current under-representation. This can be achieved by developing specific support for women, designed to overcome the structural, cultural, and security barriers they face.

This differentiated approach should not be limited to simple financial support; rather aims to create a safe environment adapted to the realities of women in the cultural sector, thus ensuring real equality in accessing opportunities for international exposure.

Mitigating financial dependence

The program's almost exclusive dependence on public funding makes it vulnerable to budgetary uncertainties. To remedy this, it is crucial to diversify funding sources, which can be achieved by:

- **Developing corporate sponsorship** : Solicit the support of national and international companies established in Niger, highlighting the benefits in terms of image and social responsibility. Long-term partnerships could be established to finance specific mobility projects or contribute to the general fund.
- **Exploring crowdfunding** : Launching online fundraising campaigns for specific mobility projects, directly involving the public and the diaspora in supporting Nigerien artistic creation.

Overcoming pressure on logistical resources:

The strong pressure on logistical capacities, limited to two vehicles, hinders the ability to meet growing demand. Several options can be explored to optimize and strengthen these resources:

- **Acquisition of new assets** : Consider long-term rental or leasing solutions to acquire new vehicles at a lower initial cost, in addition to efforts to purchase a new bus, which remains a priority.
- **Optimization of logistics planning**: Group trips by geographic area and schedule to maximize vehicle occupancy rates and reduce operational costs.

The implementation of these proposed solutions will contribute to consolidating achievements and ensuring the sustainable development of artistic mobility.



The analysis of the artistic mobility experience in Niger, supported by initiatives such as the APEIC support program, reveals a dynamic that is both instructive and promising, despite facing significant structural challenges.

This experience paves the way for replicating innovative solutions that are better adapted to the continent's realities.

Its most significant contribution lies in the concrete demonstration that it is possible to transition from the passive management of a «grant scheme» to a proactive strategy of a «logistical resource hub.»

This paradigm shift has enabled APEIC to maximize its impact despite limited resources : mobility is no longer an adjustable variable subject to the uncertainties of the annual budget but has become a sustainable institutional anchor that guarantees Nigerian talent a continuous presence on the regional and international stage.

By demonstrating the effectiveness of endogenous management, this approach helps deconstruct the dominant narrative that too often obscures the positive dynamics and concrete successes achieved on the ground in support of African mobility.»



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