**CSSC Project**

*Corporate Sustainability in Support of Culture*
*Mediation, monitoring, visibility, advocacy, and knowledge sharing to improve the contribution of the private sector in favor of artists and cultural and creative industries*

**Activity report 2025**
*(Original in French)*
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## Introduction

The CSSC project was selected in March 2023 by Université Paris Cité to receive STRATEX funding under the French government's Programme d'Investissement d'Avenir (Investment Program for the Future) as an impact project. Thanks to the concrete results it delivered on schedule, it was awarded a second Stratex funding in July 2024.

The project, which began on June 12, 2023, was led by Lilian Richieri Hanania, lawyer, mediator, UNESCO expert, researcher and lecturer at Université Paris Cité, and Anne-Thida Norodom, Professor of Public Law at Université Paris Cité and, at the time, Deputy Director of the Maurice Hauriou Center for Public Law Research (URP 1515).

Based on over 20 years of research by Lilian Richieri Hanania, the CSSC project aims to encourage the inclusion of culture and cultural diversity in corporate sustainability strategies, using a methodology to assess the actions and needs of all stakeholders (companies, artists, associations, public authorities) for the purposes of certification and benchmarking.

## The project's impact on society

The project is based on the importance of the role played by companies and their commitment on transforming our societies. In line with recent proposals by the French legal think tank Club des juristes[1], it aims to encourage visionary leadership and governance in the field of cultural diversity, enabling companies to go further than their compliance and even CSR obligations in this area.

Cultural diversity, whether expressed in the identities of a company's employees (hereinafter "internal diversity"[2]) or in the cultural expressions of the arts or local communities (hereinafter "external diversity"[3]), is intimately linked to the subject of identity and inclusion. Respecting and valuing the identity of the individuals who make up our increasingly multicultural societies are key factors in social integration, and hence in the social and political stability of our societies. By contributing to cultural diversity, companies promote more tolerant and peaceful societies, which are also more conducive to economic prosperity.

Moreover, taking culture and cultural diversity into account is now accepted in international law as a fundamental element of sustainable development. Culture and cultural diversity are, for example, mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4.7, 8.9, 11.4 and 12.b established by the United Nations. International legal instruments such as the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions also recognize culture as a key dimension of sustainable development.

Numerous reports and practical examples also underline the strong societal impact of cultural diversity, in that it:

- Contributes to the emotional and mental health of individuals and communities (WHO Regional Office for Europe 2019) and makes them more resilient in times of crisis and accelerated change, which was observed during the COVID-19 crisis (Council of Europe 2021);

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[1]Club des juristes, *Rapport du Club des juristes - L'entreprise engagée face aux défis du XXIe siècle*, November 2024, https://think-tank.leclubdesjuristes.com/les-commissions/presentation-du-rapport-lentreprise-engagee-face-aux-defis-du-xxie-siecle/.

[2]Examples of initiatives to promote a company's internal diversity: encouraging employee diversity and inclusion, efforts to reduce bias as to the origin of candidates when recruiting and evaluating companies, applying diversity and inclusion standards (e.g. ISO), policies and mechanisms to promote intercultural understanding.

[3]Examples of initiatives to promote a company's external diversity: providing spaces and facilities to increase the visibility of artistic work, offering financial or skills sponsorship, supporting local cultural communities, raising awareness of the role of art and artists in society, promoting or facilitating access to culture.

- Helps build peaceful multicultural societies by promoting "intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding (...) and cooperation"[4] (see project Culture for Peace for example);

- Raises awareness of environmental protection and helps educate the public by making complex concepts more accessible and encouraging changes in behavior and virtuous practices;

- Also benefits employees, companies and society as a whole: cultural diversity "promotes creativity, innovation, motivation, performance, productivity, employees' feeling of inclusion, mental and emotional health, professional fulfillment and commitment, quality of life (…)"[5]. This recognition of the impact of culture within companies is illustrated by their various DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) policies (see Bayer, for example).

Encouraging companies to strengthen cultural diversity within their own organization and in their relations with the societies in which they operate, including the various local communities, means fostering the dynamics that enable the fulfillment of all and working to improve the human condition, within the framework of an inspiring, systemic and forward-looking vision.

The project is bold in that it covers all companies, on an international scale, in all economic sectors. The questionnaire, divided into two parts (Internal Diversity and External Diversity), collects mainly public data from both HR and CSR teams. These questionnaires, currently available as online forms, are intended to be gathered on a future database, as part of a web platform powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

The questionnaire exercise already gives companies an opportunity to review their contribution to cultural diversity in a comprehensive way, serving both as a checklist of initiatives to be developed and as a structuring framework for reflection on a genuine strategy for promoting cultural diversity. The response analysis services offered by the CSSC project team provide individualized, tailor-made support, consisting of an audit and a report containing recommendations.

Identifying, promoting and developing corporate best practices in the field of cultural diversity will contribute to achieving the SDGs by supporting companies in more sustainable economic development, improving the emotional and mental health of individuals, and helping to build a more peaceful and cohesive society.

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[4]L. Richieri Hanania and I. Kokinova, "Public consultation on the first set of Draft European Sustainability Reporting Standards - Comments by culture Solutions", 20 June 2022, https://www.culturesolutions.eu/publications/public-consultation-esrs/, p. 4-5.
[5]*Ibid*. p. 5.

## Research methodology for an innovative project

The CSSC research project focuses on three types of stakeholders: companies, artists and public authorities. Within the framework of the project, a methodology based on mediation techniques[6] has been developed to evaluate the actions of companies in favor of cultural diversity, identify the needs of artists, measure the impact of existing public policies and legal frameworks that encourage or require the contribution of the private sector to the various cultural sectors, and finally to bring these three players together and foster their collaboration.

We proceed from the assumption that identifying the needs and levers for action of each player will facilitate their cooperation, leading to mutual enrichment and greater effectiveness of public and private policies in favor of culture and cultural diversity.

To this end, we have established a three-stage methodology[7]:

1. *Data collection and analysis*: based on an analysis of public company reports, interviews with a sample of companies, representatives of the cultural sector and local authorities, we drew up an inventory of initiatives promoting culture and cultural diversity;

2. *Developing a scoring grid* for the initiatives identified, based on a questionnaire drawn up in a format inspired by international reporting standards. The aim of the questionnaire is to showcase as many different initiatives as possible, both separately and cumulatively, while at the same time proposing categories of initiatives that remain sufficiently broad to cover the varying and evolving efforts of companies.

3. *Drawing up (and repeatedly revising) specifications for the creation of a platform* whose main functions are to:

    a. Allow companies to do a quick test (in 5 minutes) to understand the logic behind the project and, if desired, submit contact details for further action.

    b. Enable companies to submit their data by answering the CSSC Questionnaire. Given that the data to be provided is partly related to HR activity (DEI, D&I) and partly associated with CSR efforts (including via corporate foundations), this questionnaire has been split into two questionnaires, so that the relevant people can respond in accordance with their functions within the company.

    c. Score submitted data to assess the initiatives undertaken.

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[6]The interviews were prepared using the Appreciative Inquiry method, successfully used in project mediation, and the Principled Negotiation method, commonly used in mediation in general (conflict, preventive and project mediation).

[7]For a detailed presentation of our research methodology, see our Activity Report 2023, esp. p. 10-15.

d.  Enable companies to become certified when they reach a certain score (level of contribution to cultural diversity), depending on the size of the company;

e.  Initially, to produce an internal benchmarking for each company (score received out of the total possible score for each theme covered by the questionnaire) and, in a second phase, when the number of member companies is sufficiently high, to classify companies by size and sector according to their impact on culture and cultural diversity (ranking), with a view to subsequently awarding a distinction to the 20 best-ranked companies in each ranking category;

f.  Automatically generate individual scoring (and, in future, ranking) partial pre-reports for each company, which can be included in the CSR or IED disclosure, according to different service levels. These reports contain different levels of detail depending on the service level chosen by the company;

g.  Track company performance over time;

h.  Build a virtuous community and promote exchange between certified companies, including through meetings and training on good and best practices;

i.  Offer a platform where these companies, artists and public authorities can connect;

j.  On the basis of the data collected, enable the CSSC project team to draw up analysis reports for the benefit of public authorities, to better guide their policies and legislative frameworks.

These activities require the construction of a web platform by our IT partner (Poyesis) and external services from various suppliers (web designer, communications, business analyst, legal and accounting support, etc.). Some of the products and services listed above, notably certification and audit reports, can be provided manually by combining Microsoft for Business questionnaires and Excel data processing, pending the creation of the final platform.

A website has therefore been set up at www.culturalcompliance.org, a domain name previously owned by one of the team members and which had already been used to create the prototype developed by UP Cité's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence L3 students in 2024. Thanks to the work of our web designer, this site currently contains a presentation of the products and services on offer, as well as of the team as a multidisciplinary network operating in this field. Users of the website will find various information on the CSSC project, and can contact the team to receive the URL links for the CSSC Questionnaire with a view to possible certification (see below for further details).

## Products, services and business model

The **certification solution**, which had been of particular interest to UP Cité as part of our application for a second Stratex grant, was discussed with a number of players from companies, public institutions and non-governmental organizations. We also studied recognized or emerging certification solutions in France to learn from them (see Appendix 1 for selected examples).

**The main actions and conclusions drawn from this second Stratex phase are as follows**:

- Since the scoring and benchmarking proposed by the solution we have developed invites us to go further than current regulatory requirements in terms of contribution to culture and cultural diversity, offering **a certification** seems to be the entry point for our customer approach strategy. It also offers the opportunity for team members to start providing their services right away, even before having a large number of participating companies and a sufficiently high volume of data to enable benchmarking.

- Certification must be accompanied by an **audit service** to verify the information collected and, hence, the credibility of the certification. It is this audit stage that will produce the most added value in the solutions proposed, leading to an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations analyzed, and their potential decision to seek support to do better. In fact, the subsequent **audit report**, which our methodology enables us to produce initially in three levels of detail, will enable companies, depending on their resources and objectives, to improve their performance by enlisting the support of the CSSC project team or other service providers for the areas they need to strengthen.

  **Partial automated preliminary reports**, depending on the level of service purchased by the customer, are an avenue that is being explored in particular with our business and data analyst, due to their minimal marginal costs. These solutions are currently being tested by our pilot companies and other companies identified for their vision in terms of diversity, culture and CSR. Without the audit work, however, these reports do not appear to be sufficient as deliverables offered for purchase by companies.

  Since the prototype built by UP Cité's computer science and AI students between January and May 2024 did not allow for easy handling or adaptation to different service levels, we transferred the questionnaires to Microsoft forms, and developed, with the assistance of our business and data analyst, significantly automated partial preliminary reports on Excel.

- The **certification** could have **three levels**, so as to encourage virtuous corporate behavior even before comparison with a large volume of companies is feasible. The best-performing companies would be distinguished according to their score (in relation to the total possible score), while the volume of companies is not high enough to justify ranking them as envisaged in the first phase of Stratex support.

- Particular attention needs to be paid to the content of audit reports, which should provide individualized recommendations without, however, replacing the additional consulting offered as an add-on support service.

- Attention must also be paid to the possible conflicts of interest and loss of **credibility** that could arise from confusing the auditing/certification stage and support/consulting services, although there is a wide variety of situations combining certification and various levels of consulting in the certification and support examples examined.

- The products and services offered should be of great interest to **large companies**, but getting in touch with the decision-makers in these companies and acquiring this type of clientele is not easy, even for people with a strong sales profile. Moreover, the project team has not identified a sales profile that would be suited to the project's international ambitions. It seems that the sales effort could be more easily achieved through **partnerships** with international networks of auditing firms or with large auditing or consulting firms. In particular, the team has approached two consulting firms to discuss potential partnerships, with the aim of concentrating sales efforts on these firms and sharing revenues. Discussions will continue, with a potential formal presentation of services to the network of one of these firms in October 2025.

- Support from government bodies (e.g. ministries, government agencies), international organizations (e.g. UNESCO) or foundations in the cultural field generally seems incompatible with an entrepreneurial legal structure. An association might allow such support, but would likely involve the same investment of time and resources by the CSSC project team, without the economic potential of a company. The status of the two team members (one being an attorney and the other a university professor) makes it difficult to choose the most appropriate legal structure. Possible options were analyzed with the CSSC project's external legal counsel, and the decision was taken to launch the proposed services via an informal multidisciplinary network, possibly to be structured later as a separate legal entity.

- Until such time as a separate legal entity is created, the status of self-employed attorney and self-employed consultant, respectively, of the two members of the CSSC project team will enable them to start work effectively and more flexibly while the proposed solutions gradually make themselves known. In order to give a visual identity to the solutions proposed as a joint project, it was decided that a multidisciplinary network would be set up informally, on the basis of a multilateral agreement, to which our business and data analyst and other potential partners offering services relevant and complementary to the label would adhere.

- The team plans to offer the following complementary services to the certification process (auditing services being part of the certification phase):

➢ **Supporting pilot projects** based on cultural diversity to demonstrate their social and sustainable impact. We hope to develop a first project with one of our pilot companies in the coming months.

➢ **Performance diagnosis:** comprehensive diagnosis of performance in terms of contribution to cultural diversity, following assessment of the company's practices. This diagnosis includes:

1. Analysis of internal practices based on responses to the CSSC Questionnaire.
2. Assessment of relations with stakeholders (employees, partners, suppliers, local communities, etc.), based on one-hour individual interviews with interlocutors selected with the company.
3. Personalized identification of risks and opportunities in terms of contribution to cultural diversity.
4. Benchmarking against industry best practices.

➢ **Drawing up a cultural diversity strategy:** based on the diagnosis, support in defining a strategy aligned with the company's vision, values, resources and business objectives. This strategy includes:

1. Defining specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound objectives.
2. Identifying priority actions to be implemented.
3. Designing detailed action plans, including necessary resources and deadlines.
4. Providing legal support for these actions.
5. Implementing and monitoring the actions adopted, to ensure effective and integrated deployment by:
   a. Team training and awareness-raising.
   b. Setting up performance indicators.
   c. Support for CSR communication and reporting.
6. Continuous improvement and innovation, through:
   a. Periodic review of performance and adjustment of the strategy initially defined.
   b. Identification and implementation of innovative solutions.
   c. Support in engaging external and internal stakeholders.

➢ **Personalized support based on specific needs identified.**

## Calendar

During the first 11 months of the project (mid-June 2023 to May 2024), the **first Stratex funding** enabled us to finance mainly the part-time principal researcher and a research assistant, as well as services to support their activities (translation editing, documentation, organizing a final webinar). These human resources were used to:

- Collect and analyze data to confirm the questions previously developed by one of the team members;
- Construct the rating grid for corporate initiatives in favour of culture and cultural diversity;
- Draw up specifications for the platform;
- Develop a toolkit to raise awareness among change agents of the importance of cultural diversity in corporate sustainable development strategies.

An initial platform prototype was built by a team of L3 students from Université Paris Cité's *Graduate School of Artificial Intelligence and Data Science* as part of a project tutored by CSSC project researchers between January and May 2024. It was demonstrated to and tested by our pilot companies: COFACE, Michelin and Yext, but as it was difficult to modify and exploit due to technical IT choices, it was quickly abandoned.

A webinar to review the first 11 months of the project, financed by the first Stratex funding, was held on May 22, 2024[8].

On May 31, 2024, the project was selected for **BFT-Lab funding by Bpifrance**, which enabled us to be supported for 4 months (October 2024 to January 2025) by the Liberté Living Lab (LLL) incubator, and to take further steps to transfer the research to the market (improving report visualization, building automated solutions on Excel, legal advice, visual identity and project communication, translation of visibility materials, etc.). Concomitantly, we were able to continue perfecting the solutions developed as part of the project thanks to a **second Stratex grant awarded from October 2024 to June 2025** (funding of a part-time contract with UP Cité for the project's lead researcher).

With the incubator, as part of the **BFT-Lab funding**, we carried out further market research, revisited our vision of the business model to adopt, adapted our PowerPoint presentations of the project to different types of audience, finalized our business plan, and identified companies or public institutions to contact, whether as potential customers or partners. Throughout this period, we benefited from the incubator's network and were able to conduct numerous interviews to fine-tune our business plan.

**From June 2025**, the CSSC project team will continue to work on:

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[8]See the webinar and the 2024 Final Report at https://u-paris.fr/cmh/strategies-de-durabilite-des-entreprises-en- faveur-de-la-culture/.

- Analyzing, developing and perfecting the products and services to be offered, based on feedback from the first customers;
- Daily managing our developing network's operations, and reflecting on the creation of a separate legal entity in the future;
- Building partnerships (e.g. non-governmental organizations, local authorities, ministries) and identifying visionary companies that want to invest in cultural diversity (building and growing customer portfolios);
- Building the future web platform with our IT partner, adding multiple functionalities using AI tools.

## Appendix 1 - Examples of labels recognized in France

- **Diversity Label from AFNOR Certification**

**Description:** Created in 2008 by the French Ministries of Labor and Civil Service. It aims to promote diversity in the public and private sectors by highlighting companies with recruitment and career development practices that value diversity in the workplace**.**

**Certification process:** The certification process requires: (1) taking stock of the current situation in collaboration with employee representatives and trade unions; (2) defining a "diversity policy", with the appointment of a diversity referent and the involvement of social partners; (3) implementing internal communication actions to promote diversity and training for those involved; (4) implementing diversity assessment tools and drafting an annual report on the implementation of the diversity policy. Once an application file has been submitted, AFNOR Certification examines it and sends an assessor or audit team on site. The assessment report prepared by the assessor is analyzed by the Certification Commission, which proceeds to a hearing if its opinion is favorable.

**Costs:** Rates are calculated according to the size of the company (number of people concerned by the label and number of sites involved). Holders of the "Label Egalité Professionnelle" (Professional Equality Label) receive a discount. For the initial audit of a head office, depending on the number of employees, the audit time can vary from 1.25 to 5.75 days for a single site. The price per day varies between €1,100 and €1,500. Candidates for the Label Diversité are free to choose the activities and sites to be certified, subject to the coherence of the system presented.

**Commitment:** the Diversity Label is valid for a renewable period of four years. Companies must undergo an interim audit after 18 months to ensure continued compliance with the label's requirements.

Website: https://certification.afnor.org/ressources-humaines/label-diversite

- **B Corp (Benefit Corporation)**

**Description**: B Corp is an international certification that recognizes companies that meet high standards of social, environmental and governance performance, while integrating societal impact into their legal status.

**Certification process**: The company completes the "B Impact Assessment" (BIA), a free online questionnaire (over 200 questions) that evaluates its social and environmental impacts. A minimum score of 80 points is required to submit the questionnaire for verification. The in-depth audit includes supporting documents and discussions with an analyst. The company must also amend its articles of association to formalize its commitment to its stakeholders. After validation, the company signs a B Corp agreement and commits to a continuous improvement process.

**Costs**: Certification fees include verification costs (10% on submission, 90% after audit) and an annual fee proportional to the company's sales.

**Commitment**: Certification is valid for three years, and involves regular audits to ensure continuous improvement in performance.

**Website**: www.bcorporation.fr

- **ISO 14001 (Environmental Management)**

**Description**: ISO 14001 is an international label certifying the implementation of an environmental management system to reduce the ecological impact of companies.
**Certification process**: The company must analyze its environmental impact, set measurable objectives and implement a continuous improvement plan. An audit is carried out by an accredited independent certification body.
**Costs**: Costs vary according to the size of the company and the complexity of its activities, including initial audit fees and annual follow-up audits.
**Commitment**: Certification is valid for three years, with regular monitoring audits.
**Website:** https://www.iso.org/fr/iso-14001-environmental-management.html

- **Label Lucie (CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility)**

**Description**: The Lucie label is a French label based on the ISO 26000 standard, which assesses and supports companies in their corporate social responsibility initiatives.
**Certification process**: The company carries out a CSR diagnosis with the help of an independent auditor, draws up an action plan and undergoes a certification audit. The label is awarded by independent expert partners (Bureau Veritas Certification, Baker Tilly, RSEVAL, CertUp Maïeutika).
**Costs**: Fees depend on the size of the company, and include the initial audit, support, and annual fees.
**Commitment:** The label is awarded for a period of three years, with an interim evaluation.
**Website:** https://www.labellucie.com/le-parcours#labels

- **Fairtrade/Commerce Equitable**

**Description**: Fairtrade (or Max Havelaar in France) guarantees that products respect social, economic and environmental criteria in fair trade chains.
**Certification process**: Producers must comply with Fairtrade standards, undergo an audit by an accredited body (such as FLOCERT), and cooperate with certification bodies throughout the supply chain.
**Costs**: Fees vary according to the size of the producer or organization, and include audit costs and annual fees.
**Commitment**: Certification is renewable and involves regular audits.
**Website**: www.maxhavelaarfrance.org

- **European Organic Label (Organic Agriculture)**

**Description**: This label guarantees that agricultural products comply with the rules of organic farming, including the ban on GMOs and the limitation of chemical products.
**Certification process**: Producers and processors must undergo an annual audit by an accredited certification body. Compliance with European standards is verified throughout the production chain.
**Costs**: Certification fees vary according to the size of the farm or business, and include regular audits.

**Commitment**: The label requires annual audits and strict traceability.
**Website:** https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-logo_fr

- **NF Environnement (French Eco-Label)**

**Description**: French national label certifying products or services that respect the environment throughout their life cycle.
**Certification process**: The company must demonstrate that its product or service meets specific ecological criteria, verified by an independent body.
**Costs**: Costs include file analysis, audits and any laboratory tests, with costs adapted to the size of the company.
**Commitment**: The label is awarded for three years, renewable after evaluation.
**Website:** https://marque-nf.com/nf-environnement/

- **Fair Play For Planet (eco-responsible label for sports organizations)**

**Description**: A label developed in France by a committee of sustainable development experts and athletes from a variety of disciplines, in collaboration with ADEME, the French Agency for Ecological Transition, for sports clubs, venues and events. The FPFP reference framework is structured around 18 themes and 350 criteria, with quantifiable and measurable indicators leading to three possible levels of certification, depending on the score received.
**Certification process**: After an initial discussion with the FPFP team and signing a confidentiality agreement, the candidate for the label completes the FPFP framework, provides documentation to support his or her answers, and an initial on-site audit is carried out. Following assessment by the FPFP team (its report also includes areas for improvement and proposed solutions, along with the assessment of environmental and economic impact), the label can be awarded. An assessment is carried out with an FPFP expert, and the organization joins the FPFP community, with access to FPFP tools (standards watch, product/service catalog, webinars, newsletters).
**Costs**: depending on the type and size of the sports organization.
**Commitment**: The label is awarded for a period of two years, with the label-holders committing to a constant improvement approach.
Website: https://www.fairplayforplanet.org/