

**Keychange**  
**Impact Evaluation Report**  
**2018-2023**

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# Foreword by Keychange team

Keychange is a powerful global movement dedicated to promoting diversity and gender equality in the music industry. Since 2017, Keychange receives financial support from the Creative Europe programme of the European Union to carry out its activities, with a particular focus on a yearly capacity building programme that has supported a whole community of talented, creative individuals residing in twelve countries. With this report, we aimed to measure the difference the Keychange Participant Programme is making to its participants, to partners and to the wider music sector, as well as what the future of participants' programmes could look like - especially at the intersection of professional development and equity, diversity and inclusion in music.

As a team, we are grateful for the engagement of participants and partners in this process of intersectional learning and international exchange. We see how the participants shape the new standards of the music industry and continue to connect and support each other across genres, professions and borders. We are humbled by the collective success of this movement shown in the quantitative and qualitative analysis that was carried out for the purpose of this report. It is our hope that the findings will inspire many to develop, partner with, and support the implementation of similar programmes that have a direct impact on the diversity, resilience and sustainability of our music industry.

This report presents the key findings from the external evaluation commissioned by the Keychange team to Dr. Matina Magkou. While the focus of the evaluation was on the participants, a connection to the overall Keychange initiative was sought.

## Keychange team

### Evaluation Methodology

Rapid literature review

Review of background material (funding applications, interim reports, mentoring scheme reports, Pledge reports)

Focus group with project management team

Focus groups and short interviews with 24 Keychange participants from various cohorts <sup>1</sup>

Analysis of evaluation data from surveys to Keychange participants 2020-2021/ 2022 and 2023 : 97% response rate <sup>2</sup>

Analysis of final external evaluations survey: 15% response rate

11 in depth-interviews with Keychange festivals, funders other partners

Note: names of participants are only revealed when approval has been granted

1. An invitation to all cohort participants was addressed to identify people for the interviews. Short profiles were created from some of the interviews that are included in this report. The criteria for the selection were mainly based on geographical representation, balance between cohorts and a balance between artists and innovators.

2. Though relatively modest, it constituted the minimum benchmark we had established.

# About Keychange

Keychange is a global network and movement working towards a total restructure of the music industry in reaching full gender equality. Keychange consists of three core partners across three countries: PRS Foundation (UK), Reeperbahn Festival (DE) and Musikcentrum Öst (SE). In addition Keychange has a strong support network of partners from 12 countries working proactively to achieve change, complemented by Keychange U.S. which brings more focus on the US scene. The core activities of Keychange revolve around a participant programme and a global Pledge to increase gender diversity within the music industry.

Initially launched as a small-scale cooperation project supported by the Creative Europe programme from 2017 to 2019 (Phase I) during which a first cohort of 60 artists and innovators from 6 countries took part in the programme, Keychange received renewed support from the Creative Europe programme in June 2019. In the subsequent period from 2020 to 2023 (Phase II), three additional cohorts were formed, marking a significant expansion of Keychange into a comprehensive initiative across 12 European countries and Canada. The 2020–2023 participant programme was an annual intake of an average 74 artists and innovators from across 12 countries, who were chosen through a rigorous, intersectional and inclusive process to reflect Keychange values. In 2022 Keychange successfully established and launched Keychange U.S.<sup>3</sup> as a charitable non-profit organisation championing gender-equity and inclusion within the US music industry, with a first cohort of 25 artists and innovators.

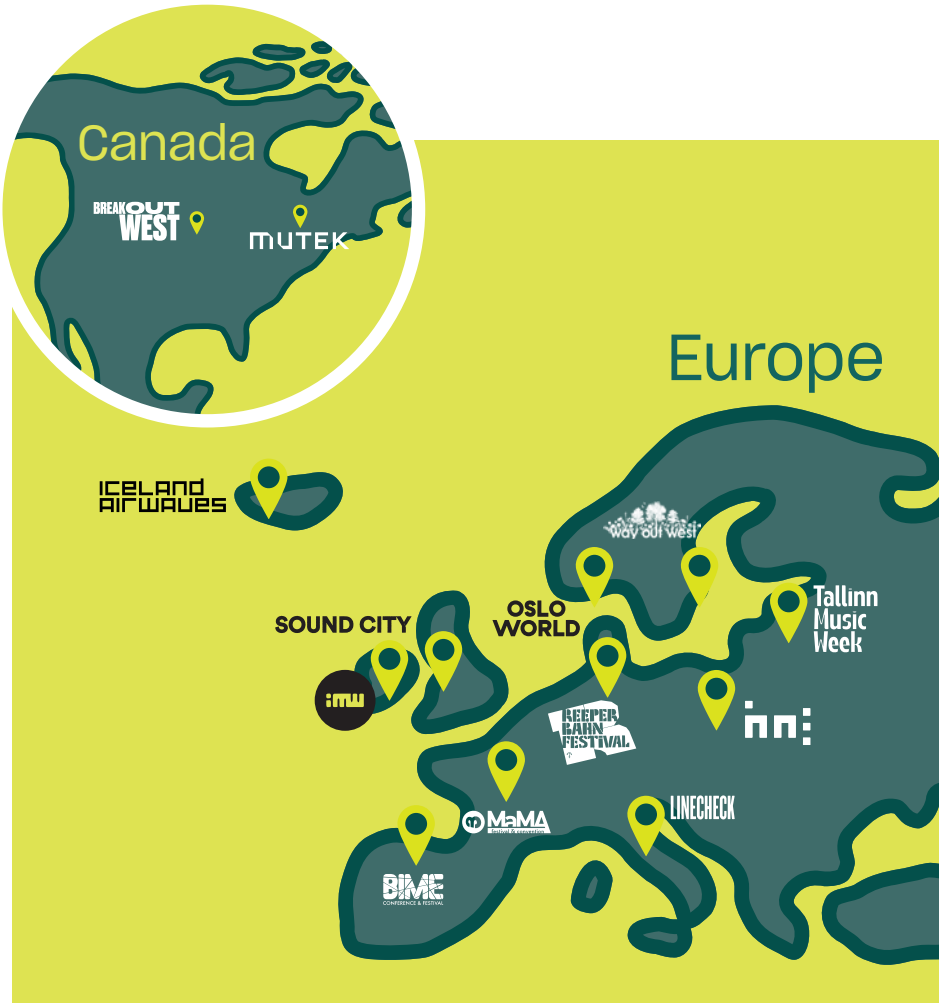
The Keychange Pledge constitutes an invitation to music organisations, festivals, companies and any entities working within the music industry to commit publicly to achieving a wider, more equitable, inclusive and intersectional representation. In February 2023, Keychange celebrated five years of the Keychange Pledge with the launch of the Keychange Pledge Action Plan in Brussels. This document celebrates the change-making impact of the Pledge, highlighting that by the end of 2021, 64% of reporting Pledge signatories had already achieved or surpassed their Pledge of at least 50% representation of women and gender-diverse artists and professionals; with others making progress towards equity through self-determined timelines. The 4-point Action Plan and industry-wide call to action includes intersectional inclusivity (Beyond Gender), SMART pledges (Urgent Action), international exchange (Global Community) and exchange of best practices (Education & Activism).

Keychange's actions and aims are steeped in our belief that a better world is possible, through a better music industry. In 2018 Keychange presented a Manifesto for change at the European Parliament in Brussels, calling for collective action in four areas: Acknowledgement, Investment, Research and Education. In 2024 Keychange prepared a new manifesto through consultations with participants (at manifesto workshops carried out at festivals in 2020–2023). The

3. Please note that this report does not include full data from the U.S. programme as it is still in progress.

Keychange Manifesto 2.0 was launched in April 2024 at Tallinn Music Week with five core aspirations: Better Working Conditions, Care, Education, Intersectional Representation and Safer Spaces.

Keychange is led by Reeperbahn Festival (DE), PRS Foundation (UK), and Musikcentrum Öst (SE) supported by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, in partnership with BIME, Breakout West, Different Sounds (Inne Brzmienia), FACTOR, Iceland Airwaves, Ireland Music Week, Linecheck, Liverpool Sound City, MaMA, Mutek, Oslo World, SACEM, Socan, Tallinn Music Week, and Way Out West. Keychange U.S. is supported by a core donation of TuneCore and Believe.



# Keychange in numbers<sup>4</sup>



## Keychange partners

32 forward-thinking music industry partners and sponsors in 12+ countries

Evolution of Keychange network partners and countries over the years

### 2017-2019:

9 in 7 countries

(PRS Foundation + Liverpool Sound City, Musikcentrum Öst + Way Out West, Reeperbahn Festival, Tallinn Music Week, BIME, Iceland Airwaves, Mutek)

### 2019-2023:

19 in 12 countries

(PRS Foundation + Liverpool Sound City, Musikcentrum Öst + Way Out West, Reeperbahn Festival, Tallinn Music Week, BIME + Fundacion Industria Creativas, Iceland Airwaves, Ireland Music Week, SACEM + MaMA Festival & Convention, Linecheck, Oslo World, Inne Briezunia / Different Sounds, Mutek + BreakOut West + FACTOR + Socan Foundation)

### 2023-2024:

21 in 14 countries

(same + Keychange + Keychange U.S.)

4. Data refers to Phase II participants (3 cohorts between 2020 and 2023).

# Keychange programme

## 4 Cohorts of talent development programme:

2018 (Phase I), 2020-2021, 2022 and 2023 (Phase II)

## 42 Creative Labs, out of which 29 Manifesto sessions

25 networking events  
130 workshops and speed-meetings  
83 panels and keynotes



participants supported to advance their careers through cross-border collaborations and showcases



**142**

artist showcases between 2018 and 2023



Full Network Meet-Ups



**194**

Mentoring pairs during Phase II



**+/- 9.000 euro**

invested in each participant (average of 2.250 euro as direct travel bursary including relevant access and childcare top-ups)



**\$52.74 million**

advertising value equivalent



**+/- 150**

speaking opportunities for innovators (as panellists, moderators, experts, trainers) at partner events between 2018 and 2023



**21**

Inspiration Awards were awarded by Keychange to celebrate women and gender-diverse individuals for their impact within the music industry



**650+**

Pledge signatories from 40+ countries



**43**

influential ambassadors

# The Keychange Talent Programme

The Keychange talent programme has been designed to assist underrepresented artists and innovators in acquiring new skills, expanding networks and internationalising their careers and empowering them to advocate for gender equity within the music industry internationally as well as in their own contexts.

## Programme participants

Despite the high number of participants per cohort, with high demand Keychange is only able to support a limited number of women and gender-diverse applicants.

From Phase II Keychange Participant data we see that: 2,097 applications were received, with 10,6% applicants being selected and supported.



**92.8%**

of participants identified as Women

**7.2%**

identified as gender-diverse (4% non-binary, 1.3% gender fluid, 1.3% gender queer and 0.4% as 'other')



**42.8%**

of participants identified as LGBTQIA+ (15.6% Bisexual, 9.2% Queer, 8.7% Pansexual, 8.1% Gay/Lesbian, and 1.2% 'Other'), compared to 57.2% identifying as Heterosexual or Straight



**6.8%**

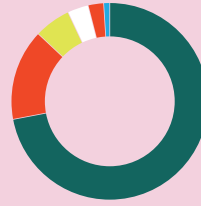
of selected Participants' current gender identity is different to their sex at birth

Keychange is gradually attracting more gender-diverse artists and professionals, with over 9% of Year 3 participants identifying as such. There has been significant learning within the Keychange team on how to address and respond to the needs of gender-diverse individuals in a thoughtful manner and a continued commitment for improving practice.





**28.6%**  
of selected participants identify as belonging to the global majority



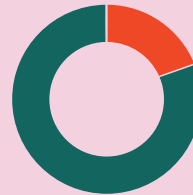
- 71.4% of selected participants identified as having White Heritage
- 15.1% have Mixed Heritage
- 5.7% have Black Heritage
- 3.1% have Asian Heritage
- 2.1% have Arab Heritage
- 1% identified as being from another global majority background



- 64.1% of selected participants were aged 25-34
- 25.6% were 35-44
- 7.6% were 16-24
- 2.7% were aged 45-54

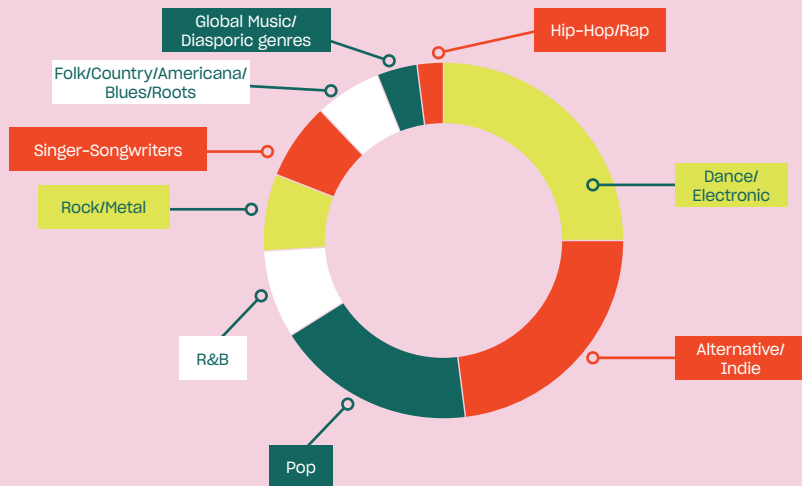


**14.1%**  
of selected participants required additional Childcare Top-Up support



**18.6%**  
of selected participants when asked identified as Deaf, Disabled or having an impairment which affects their day-to-day lives

While the initiative has started with a focus on gender equity, it is increasingly taking a more intersectional approach to be more inclusive and sensitive addressing wider inequalities in the music industry, including ethnic diversity and race, disability, age or parenthood.

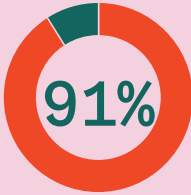


25% of selected artists are most associated with Dance and Electronic music genres, followed by 23.2% in Alternative/Indie genres, 18.8% in Pop, 7.1% in R&B, 6.3% in Rock/Metal, 6.3% are Singer-Songwriters, 4.5% in Folk/Country/Americana/Blues/Roots genres, 3.6% in Global Music/Diasporic genres, and 2.7% work in Hip-Hop/Rap genres.

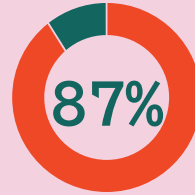
The breakdown of the genres in which participants mostly work is representative of the profile of partner festivals involved in the programme. The Keychange team is aware of the need to find more balance in genre representation.

## Programme evaluation

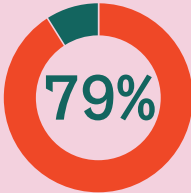
Overall, the annual evaluation reports from Phase II have shown that:



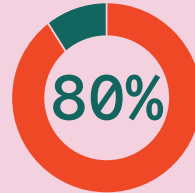
of participants are glad to have taken part in Keychange



feel that they have a supportive network



feel that they have been seen and heard



feel more connected to international contacts

Moreover, the external evaluation survey showed that:

**100%**

believe that Keychange has considerably or somewhat considerably contributed to encouraging role models for future generations in the music industry

**97%**

believe that Keychange has managed to a great extent to support the artistic and business development of women and gender-diverse people in the music industry

**97%**

believe that Keychange has stimulated creative and industry innovation

**95%**

believe that Keychange has raised awareness of gender inequity in the music industry

**90%**

of the participants rate very high Keychange's contribution to the creation of a transnational movement on gender equity in the music industry.

**87%**

believe that it has influenced considerably or somewhat considerably policy, business models, funding and music industry development.

## AREA OF IMPACT:

# Career development

## The talent development programme

The Keychange talent development programme offered a number of opportunities to selected participants:

- Full meet ups bring the entirety of a cohort together for two full days of training programme that focuses on upskilling, inspiring, and bringing together and stimulating collaboration between musicians and innovative professionals from the music industry and other creative sectors – outside of an industry event (first meeting in Stockholm 2020, London 2022 and Brussels 2023) and within a large event (Reeperbahn Festival 2021, 2022, 2023).
- Showcase opportunities extended to artists and speaking opportunities extended to innovators based on a rigorous consultation process with the partner festivals, who choose participants based on event suitability, export-readiness and achieving strong representation depending on a set of criteria including gender-diversity, ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity (where possible) and disability.
- Creative Labs at partner festivals for up to 12 participants at a time, during which artists and innovators are provided with dedicated workshops, (speed) meetings, inspirational talks with industry leaders with the aim to develop an environment of creative and critical thinking whose aim is to further the horizons and freedoms within the industry.
- A six month mentoring programme<sup>5</sup> run in partnership with shesaid.so from March to September each year aiming to pair each participant with an experienced professional who helps develop their career and knowledge towards a direction desired by the artist or innovator themselves

## Focus on artists

Overall, artists have expressed deep appreciation for Keychange's contribution in their careers and especially for the opportunity to perform in international showcases, highlighting the financial support received for these experiences. Depending on their level of experience in international settings, some appreciated the opportunity to better understand how the music industry works which prepared them for their next steps in the music industry. For less experienced artists, Keychange served as a “soft landing”, offering a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging within a larger movement. While others, especially those with more experience and international presence, valued the rapid connections they were able to establish. Furthermore, a few artists interviewed emphasised that their successes following their participation in

5. This element was introduced in Phase II.

showcases was the result of their personal efforts and thorough preparation before, during, and after the events. This involved arranging meetings with industry experts, following up with contacts made during the showcases, and leveraging these connections to secure opportunities such as tours, collaborations, and signing contracts. This proactive professional approach and skill development were also evident among less experienced artists, shaping opportunities that unfolded after their Keychange participation.

Irrespective of their level of experience, artists highlighted how participating in showcases through Keychange opened doors for performances in other countries. Keychange played a crucial role by guiding artists through the process, facilitating introductions to industry professionals, and fostering connections with fellow participants. Many emphasised the profound impact on their careers establishing connections with festivals in their home country, leading to further opportunities both nationally and internationally.

While a minority of participating artists may have found the programme less aligned with their career stage at the time, the overarching sentiment is one of appreciation for Keychange's provision of valuable music industry-specific knowledge and skills.

*“Keychange has boosted my self-esteem and my artistic confidence, enhanced my entrepreneurial side and made me want music more than I used to.”*

(Arya Delgado, Artist, Italy, 2022 cohort end survey)

Nevertheless, a handful of artists in surveys and interviews across cohorts noted a desire for additional creative development, expressing a wish for a more balanced approach that encompasses both artistic and industry-oriented support.

*“I had never been to a showcase before. And even if you are in the music business already, it takes time to understand how this works. For example, I didn't know how to move, how to plan my presence at a showcase festival. And then, after the first one and having had some exchanges with Keychange participants and thanks to the introductions by the Keychange staff to other people, for my second one I was more ready.”*

(interview with Anna Bassy, Artist, Italy, January 2024).

*“Being a part of Keychange as an artist was one of the most fulfilling years in my career. Not only was I super inspired by meeting some incredible like-minded international artists and innovators, but also a whole range of opportunities suddenly opened up in front of me. Keychange has given me the tools, guidance and contacts much needed in this industry, to pursue further opportunities for my music and career, and to grow my income from music.”*

(Laura Fares, Artist, Spain, 2022 cohort end survey)

## Focus on innovators

When it comes to innovators, from the final evaluation survey we observed that the majority of them were freelancers (65,2%) at the time they participated in Keychange and that even more of them are freelancers today (73,9%). 47,8% of them answered that the scope of their work or the number of projects they run has expanded considerably because of enrolling in Keychange. **77,3% of them even mentioned that Keychange had a very considerable or high influence on their career.**

Most innovators interviewed underlined that they were already well-established in the profession before participating in Keychange. The programme however made them feel more confident and resilient and gave them a passport to enter different new and more international) environments and land important deals or new jobs.

Innovators interviewed underlined that the speaking opportunities they had, were highly valued as beneficial for their career development and their positioning in the wider music industry. A few underlined as well that Keychange could have invested more effort in promoting the messages and content of each panel, not just the event itself to increase exposure for Keychange participants but also to share more participant-led content with wider communities.

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*“I had frequently been invited to host or participate in panels within Iceland, so my experience was somewhat familiar. However, in Tallinn, it was my first time doing it abroad. The opportunity to engage in such activities internationally is significant, and I found the panel to be highly relevant to my interests. I also established valuable connections during the event.”*

(Josie Anne Gaitens, Innovator, Iceland, interview December 2023)

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*“Through Keychange I have increased the value for my company, but also as a booking agent. By expanding my network, getting better at networking and being part of a panel, people now see me as more important and impressive than before. As a result, I can use this to increase my paycheck.”*

(Innovator, Norway, 2022 cohort end survey)

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*“Being part of Keychange this year was like some kind of magic spell, which made me feel like everything was possible, and that even if things didn't go well, I would have the necessary support from the community. During this year, I hired 2 people, I secured my organisation's model and got a very prestigious Residency in the US.”*

(Gwendolen Sharp, Innovator, France, 2022 cohort end survey)

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## Supporting artists and innovators at the same time

Overall, the evaluation showed that participants perceived the Keychange programme as a whole, and not as stand-alone components.

Providing a talent development program to both artists and innovators while striking a balance between business and creative development, networking, and internationalisation across diverse geographies is challenging. Phase II cohort end surveys indicate that 73% of participants, varying in career levels and skill needs, found the programme to be extremely or very relevant, with 76% expressing the same sentiment about the speakers.

From allowing participants to get a better understanding of the different profiles in the music industry to partnerships that were created thanks to these intersections, bringing artists and innovators together has however been valued positively.

Finally, a frequently mentioned area for improvement, which could also elevate the careers of Keychange participants, involved leveraging their potential as speakers/ workshop leaders in creative labs and other capacity-building sessions to enhance peer learning but also to tap into the participants' high levels of skills and knowledge, especially in regards to gender equity in music.

Finally, participants have shared positive feedback regarding the mentorship scheme, expressing gratitude for the relationships that offered them an external perspective, instilled confidence, provided a connection with industry professionals for guidance and advice, and offered insights into potential future professional opportunities. From the 2022 and 2023 mentorship scheme reports, we see that:

- 86% of mentees felt the experience widened their professional network
- 81% of mentees felt it had increased their confidence
- 89% of mentees felt it increased their industry knowledge
- 85% of mentees felt it had increased their skills
- 82% of mentees felt that their mentor was a strong match

The different programme components have been almost equally valued as necessary for the future of the initiative. Most importantly, full network meetups were highly appreciated, often described as an empowering and safe music event, followed by showcasing opportunities for artists and speed networking opportunities.

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*“Keychange is by far the most versatile and knowledge-expanding programme we have participated in. The multi-faceted program has been extremely useful in making new contacts, finding our audience and getting inspiration.”*

(Helen Västrik, Artist, Estonia, 2022 cohort end survey)

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*“I would definitely keep the international meetups. I think that those were really fundamental and kind of cementing the connection with other participants”*

(Shauna Watson, Innovator, Ireland, 2020 cohort, interview October 2023)

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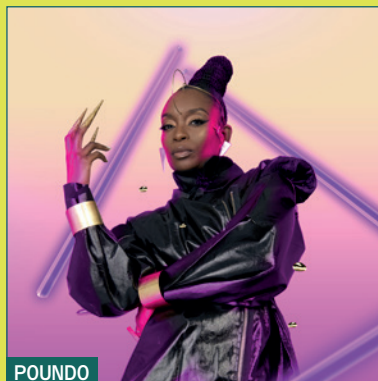




# Poundo

“Instead of making music, you ask me to prove that I belong here”. This statement reflects challenges that Poundo, a Keychange 2023 cohort participant, has faced since becoming more professionally involved in music in recent years. Raised in France and dividing her time between Paris and New York, Poundo also brings elements of her Senegalese heritage into her music.

For Poundo, Keychange stands out because it is European: “You’re not just in your country or geographic zone”. She also stressed the selection of the Keychange fellow participants. “I feel like Keychange really takes care in trying to get to know the artists or the innovators and find people that really believe in the project, but also want to make a change in the industry”.



Highlighting the impact of Keychange showcase opportunities, Poundo spoke of the connections forged after her performance at Reeperbahn. “Right now, I’m talking with South Africa, Germany, France, Canada, Spain, and even the US, and it’s nice because they saw me at that festival.” But she also explained her meticulous preparations for the Reeperbahn festival in Germany and underlined the need for a proactive mindset when participating in Keychange to make the best out of it. “For Germany, I prepared it, I did all the work ahead. I worked from my outfit to my music and then tried to reach out to people even before I got there to schedule some appointments. I even made some flyers to tell people to come to my show.”

Poundo recognised that Keychange has significantly contributed to her professional development. “Now I have a label, a new booking agent, a publisher and a distributor that I’m gonna sign with right now. Keychange has helped me answer questions and meet people that were part of the programme that were specialised in publishing and distribution and they gave me advice. So it’s all that system that helped, in a way, my development.”

# Sandira Blas

Sandira Blas, a participant in the 2018 Keychange cohort, joined the programme after recently relocating to Europe from a successful career in partnerships, marketing, and events in the US music industry. Seeking opportunities to engage in the music sector in Europe, she found Keychange to be the perfect platform. She highlighted the program's role in providing fixed opportunities for talks and presentations, helping her build confidence and reshape her industry positioning. The connections made during Keychange continued to benefit her beyond the program.



SANDIRA BLAS

Post-Keychange, Sandira acted as artist manager for cohort and Icelandic musician dj. flugvél og geimskip and helped book her on a European Tour with the US noise rock band Lightning Bolt. Additionally, through Keychange funding, she collaborated with the initiative by producing various projects with other alumni.

Later in her professional career, she initiated an Artist-in-Residence programme with Sónar+D & Beats by Dre inside Factory Berlin, Germany's largest innovation hub with over 6,000 creative entrepreneurs. "Offering unique opportunities, mentorship, and a platform to support underrepresented voices, is kind of the same gesture reminiscent of what I received through Keychange and how I do my work professionally," she explained. Her achievements include €1M in fundraising for artists and works shortlisted or won the Lumen Prize, ADC Gold Cube, S+T+ARTS, and being recognized in the shesaid.so Alt-Power 100 Music List in 2019. She emphasized the ongoing necessity for change within the colonial realm of the music industry and how programmes like Keychange are a great vehicle for that. "I'm just a female person in music with an appetite, big goals, and a little part. I just needed that support to feel empowered."

With over 20 years of international experience in the music industry and startup ecosystems, Sandira, now based in Berlin, is the Partnership's Director for the Fotografiska Berlin Museum. While recognising that her journey is a culmination of various factors, she acknowledges that "if it wasn't for Keychange, or if I didn't get opportunities for major conference and festival talks that positioned me in a new light, I don't think I would get here so quickly."

## AREA OF IMPACT:

# Confidence building

The evaluation revealed that building confidence is a crucial factor for women and gender-diverse artists and music-creators to overcome obstacles and enhance their visibility in a predominantly cis male-dominated industry. According to the final evaluation survey, 85% of participants experienced a significant increase in confidence through their engagement with Keychange.

The creation of a supportive peer network actively contributing to the advancement of gender equity in the sector was highlighted by many as the primary factor for building confidence and a sense of belonging.

“Keychange has been a tremendously powerful network for me, allowing me to connect with like-minded and inspiring individuals, and it has also given me the confidence to break out of my shell and chart my own course. I’ve been making wonders ever since, and I couldn’t be more grateful.” (Flora Garnier, Innovator, Canada, 2022 cohort, final evaluation survey)

Moreover, both survey respondents and especially participants interviewed, acknowledged that Keychange bestowed upon them a “stamp of approval”, rendering them more recognisable in the music industry. This heightened confidence is evident in their increased motivation to pursue career objectives within the music industry.

Finally, as reflected in the testimonies of participants, Keychange provided a crucial boost for parents in the music industry, enabling them to fully participate and seize opportunities without feeling restricted by societal constraints related to parenthood.

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*“I have been working completely independently in the music industry for 7 years, mainly as a result of lack of confidence in approaching industry professionals with the mindset that I don’t need to prove myself first and that what I have to offer is valuable. The most incredible take-away from this programme for me was very simply having the opportunity to connect with people in a very supportive environment within the industry from all walks of life, and realising they are real people, just like me. They are in it for the same reason – for the love of music!”*

(Moriah Woods, Artist, Poland, 2022 cohort end survey)

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*“This experience has left me feeling like I belong, like I matter, like I can do anything and actually have an impact on an industry that has, more often than not, made me feel like I can’t. Keychange has truly woken me up!”*

(Isabelle Banos, Innovator, Canada, 2022 cohort end survey)

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## AREA OF IMPACT:

# Being part of a community

The main takeaway for all participants is that they feel that their participation in Keychange made them feel part of a community. In the final evaluation survey, 87% stated that they have met people that share the same societal values in the music industry. 84% mentioned that they feel part of a community and 77% feel that they can easily approach someone from the Keychange community for advice.

We also observed that cooperation among Keychange participants exceeds the period of their participation in the programme. 53,8% of the final evaluation survey respondents mentioned that they are in regular contact with 4 to 10 members of the Keychange community and 33,3% of them with 1 to 3 members. The most frequent ways of cooperation are receiving valuable information from fellow participants (90%) and promoting their work (92%). **46% mentioned that they have either hired or been hired by another Keychange participant or collaborated closely with them**, 41% mentioned that they got support for building a new initiative, venture or idea, 59% that they were referred by another Keychange participant to important contacts in the industry and 23% mentioned that they have even started a new initiative together.

Most importantly, we observed a high level of appreciation among Keychange participants. During the interviews with participants, there were often mentions of other Keychange participants from their cohort or other cohorts that served as role models. In the final evaluation survey, 92.3% of participants acknowledged that the work of a fellow Keychange participant served as inspiration for them and underlined the need to involve them further in Keychange programme components. Many expressed gratitude for the impressive careers some participants had built in the music industry. The presence of parents in the programme was specifically noted as inspiring, demonstrating that

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*“Keychange showed me that there is an amazing community of creative talent all around the world who has decided to collaborate instead of competing. Mentioning one word “Keychange” has built so many instant connections between me and “random strangers” that it is a personal empowerment tool even as a word (as there is a whole world and community of values behind these magic letters).”*

(Leeni Laasfeld, Iceland, Innovator, 2022 cohort end survey)

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*“Keychange provided one of the very few helpful environments for me as a mother working in music. I felt I really had the same opportunities as everyone else involved in the project, because the top up Keychange gave me was crucial to enable me to be present and enjoy the opportunities I’ve got. I didn’t feel I could do less than others just because I have a child. This is real work against discrimination.”*

(Federica Furlani, Italy, Artist, 2022 cohort end survey)

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a successful career in the music industry can coexist with childcare responsibilities. Recognition was also extended to innovators who contribute to the ecosystem through emotional support and career guidance. Some participants highlighted the commitment of fellow Keychangers to knowledge about trans rights, equality and diversity in the music industry.

“Keychange is important for finding other like-minded talented music industry individuals doing interesting work in their own territories. It's like a sorority that connects the dots between countries.”

(Mar Sellars, Innovator, Canada, 2022 cohort end survey)



**46% mentioned that they have either hired or been hired by another Keychange participant or collaborated closely with them**

THE RODEO

# Rosana Corbacho

Rosana Corbacho studied psychology while working in the music industry in labels, events and press and artists booking agencies. Recognising the challenges faced by individuals in the industry, from dissatisfaction with their jobs to creative blocks and anxiety, she felt compelled to create a positive change. “I put the focus not just on the musicians but all those that work in the industry- there is something wrong with the environment.”. Rosana explained that the passion of the people working in the industry attracted her first and then realising all the struggles they face, “that they struggled with life work balance, or that everything was so fast they could not enjoy, and then the creative blocks and anxiety happening”.



ROSANA CORBACHO

During Rosana’s cohort year, Covid-19 happened. A lot of the people responding to the surveys and interviews mentioned Rosana’s name as an important safety and accompanying force during the pandemic. “So when Covid happened I asked myself what can I give to my peers over this situation, what can offer that is realistic as well as being respectful to the Keychange programme team”. Rosana curated several peer-to-peer therapy support sessions online to help her peers navigate through the struggles of the pandemic, for free and without having to commit to all sessions, “a space for meeting and connecting emotionally and strengthening the network”. “In the music industry we identify ourselves with our jobs and that’s very powerful when everything goes well. But when something is putting everything in danger, our whole identity shakes”, she explained. Rosana also appreciated the trust she received from the Keychange team to implement this. “It really felt like a functional family”, she added.

Her enduring takeaway from Keychange includes valuable friendships and organic collaborations worldwide. She has expanded her professional reach as a clinical and humanistic psychologist specialised in the music industry and collaborates often with various Keychange participants and festivals. Rosana collaborates closely with Lena Ingwersen, Managing Director of the transnationally acting Music Cities network and a fellow cohort member, where she joined her for the European Music Business Task Force doing the one-to-one support on the master classes, an example of the multifaceted collaborations fostered within the Keychange community.

# Desirée Dawson

Desirée Dawson, is a multifaceted Canadian recording artist, songwriter, and producer, engaged in the 2023 Keychange cohort. Despite her previous participation in talent development programmes primarily in Canada and being confident in her music creation and performing abilities, reflecting on her decision to join Keychange, Desirée recognised the potential for further growth and a timely opportunity to familiarise herself with the European market. “None of the ones I’ve participated in have really been in person... So the idea of spending over a year in regular contact with so many people appealed to me. There were a lot of people for you to find YOUR people”, she explained.



DESIRÉE DAWSON

One of her people and impactful connections was Kingsley Swim, a fellow Canadian artist, project development entrepreneur and founder of Black Market Framework – an initiative supporting black and indigenous creatives in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. “I watched Kingsley at the Keychange events: the way she showed up at things, the way she was serious about her business. But also, for me her intersectionality is very important. Being like this is hard to find in the music industry, honestly. People who are dedicated to music and dedicated to supporting the art and dedicated to a better world for us all to live in”, explained Desirée.

Post- Keychange, Desirée and Kingsley initiated a collaboration on Desirée’s participation at the UK’s Great Escape festival. Although both artists had ongoing projects during their Keychange experience, once circumstances allowed it, they decided to explore collaboration on a project basis. “The opportunity to collaborate for Great Escape solidified our working together. She is my point of contact now, she is able to apply for grants and participate at the conference programme for me and talk about her own work. It worked out perfectly”.

This partnership exemplifies how two Canadian professionals, familiar with each other but never having met, cultivated a meaningful connection on European grounds. Desirée emphasized the blessing of connecting with numerous like-minded individuals through Keychange, expressing her desire to collaborate exclusively with those who align with her values. “I am mixed, I am black, I am queer, I am politically active and much of my music is about social justice and the way we are collectively healing together”.

## AREA OF IMPACT:

# Becoming more vocal about gender equity in the music industry

The challenges to achieving equitable participation and success for women and gender-diverse music creators in the music industry are immense, and Keychange alone could not address them entirely. A remarkable outcome of Keychange is the significant impact on participants' empowerment and confidence, making them more vocal advocates for gender equity in the music industry. As one interviewee expressed, Rodeo that is involved in the collective Tranjectoires uniting various women and gender-diverse individuals from the cultural sector, *"Keychange is still with us; we share the movement."*

### **76% of participants in the survey reported that they initiated a movement promoting gender equity within the music industry in their own environments.**

Keychange participants are expressing their increased vocal engagement in diverse ways. Some are actively involved in shesaid.so national branches, while others participate in various collectives that bring together women and gender-diverse individuals in their local or national contexts or organise meet-ups with alumni across Keychange cohorts in their country. Additionally, some collaborate with Keychange festivals to organise events, conduct research, and advocate for gender equity and improved working conditions in the music industry or even set up residencies for female artists and parents, as Clemence Leauté, a Keychange artist and innovator that participated in the 2020–2021 cohort.



*"After 16 years in the industry, my participation in the Keychange program was a true life changer. Getting in one room with other female and queer professionals within the industry was my version of utopia becoming reality. The amount of support, encouragement, and knowledge I received is something I've been trying to give to other female and gender minorities within the industry ever since."*

(Lina Burghausen, Innovator, Germany, 2022 cohort end survey)



Similarly, the same percentage indicated that they have become more vocal online, actively advocating for gender equity in the music industry and addressing gender-based barriers and that they are leveraging more public speaking opportunities to raise awareness and discuss issues related to equity in the music industry. 69% of the external evaluation survey respondents reported that through Keychange they acquired to a very large extent new knowledge that enabled them to create safer spaces and 68% of those who felt that the question was applicable to them reported that after their participation in Keychange they have requested and adopted clear accessibility and inclusivity information in their performances. Finally, 64% responded that they pursued further training in the field of gender equality in the music industry, however, no further details are available on this point.




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*“Keychange enabled me to become part of a global movement for change. An environment like that propels you forward, through new-found community, conversation and purpose. Even just the sentiment that Keychange represents, empowered me to hold my own as a non-male in music, because every individual act of fighting for my right to be treated equally as a musician is understood now to be a fight for the greater cause, fought by a whole collective, and I'm not alone.”*

*(Imogen Williams, Artist, UK, 2022 cohort end survey)*

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**76% of participants in the survey reported that they initiated a movement promoting gender equity within the music industry in their own environments.**

IMOGEN WILLIAMS

## SPOTLIGHT ON POLISH PARTICIPANTS & PARTNERS

“I left Keychange with this thought: that Poland is behind on gender equity in the music industry”, said Misia Furtak, a composer, singer, and bass player that also produces music and is also a cultural manager and activist. Collaborating with her fellow 2022 cohort member Tamara Kaminska, Director of Music Export Poland, and Magda Cholyst from the previous cohort, Founder of Artist in Bloom, educator, artist coach, and process designer, they actively participated in advancing discussions on gender balance in the country. For Misia, being part of an international platform as Keychange was important for understanding other realities abroad. “You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. There are things that are being done in other territories, and if you have that knowledge you can try to implement it in your territory”, she said.



MISIA FURTAK



IFI UDE

Magda Cholyst stressed that after attending her last Keychange event, she realized that despite engaging in enlightening conversations about equitable conditions in the music industry, real change wouldn’t occur unless she initiated a broader conversation involving the entire industry, including men. Aware that Different Sounds, the Polish festival collaborating with Keychange, was planning Manifesto sessions, she approached them and said “Let’s put this upside down! Let’s invite various representatives from the music industry: men, women, international, Polish! and let’s have a design thinking process on what we can do in Poland”.



YOURI ZAKOVITCH

Agnieszka Wojciechowska & Rafał Chwała from Different Sounds Festival were also proud of this process and partnering with former Keychange participants. “Particularly relevant was the multi-stage research process on inclusivity in the Polish music industry. During the workshop, we were able to invite not only female artists, but also male and female journalists, producers, managers – both from Poland and participants of the Keychange Creative Lab from various countries in Europe and around the world.”. The contribution of a festival in advancing the conversation on gender equity in the music industry on the national level was also underlined by another Keychange participant from the 2022 cohort in that year’s final survey. “The Different Sounds Festival is certainly an excellent partner and ambassador for the project. The approach of both programme directors makes me believe that the topic of underrepresented genders in the Polish music industry will finally be taken care of to such an extent that concrete steps will be taken which we could only dream of so far.”

## SPOTLIGHT ON PARTICIPANTS

# Sofie Søndervik Sæther

Sofie Søndervik Sæther embarked on her journey in gender equity activism within the music sector during her early 20s, inspired by a vision of creating opportunities for herself and younger fellow female musicians that did not space on stages. This commitment led her to her role as Programme Director in Jeunesses Musicales in Norway, where she designs and oversees programmes fostering diversity and equity within the music sector. Notably, Sofie founded, managed and today oversees LOUD, a Norwegian multi-genre support programme for the young music sector and has served on the board of the Girls Rock Camp Alliance.



SOFIE SØNDERVIK SÆTHER

While initially hesitant about applying to Keychange, Sofie was drawn to the talent development aspect of the programme. After the challenges posed by Covid-19, she sought to expand her network and gain insights into the commercial and professional aspects of the music sector which brought her to participate in the 2022 cohort. Sofie also felt that this could be her own contribution to the programme. Recognising the potential for collaboration between NGO-type music projects and the commercial sector, she saw Keychange as occupying a unique middle ground, where she could also contribute to.

Sofie valued the mentoring she received from Keychange. “It gave me the good conversations that helped me look at some priorities in my life. Just to have that space for those types of conversation – that most people never really get– was very valuable and pushed me to see a lot of my skills and experiences in new ways”. Her mentor also invited her to a panel with her at the Pristina Music Week after the mentorship period had ended.

Despite Norway’s relatively advanced discourse on gender equity in the music industry, Sofie emphasized the continued challenges. “Numbers are still very low. There is almost no female producer producing other people’s music. They produce their own but no other people’s. And I don’t know any professional female masterers in Norway. The attitude towards gender equity is different here, but there are still many challenges.” While the attitude towards gender equity differs across countries, Sofie acknowledged that there is still much work to be done in Norway and beyond.

# Looking forward: Towards a more equitable music industry

## What the data tells us

While data on gender equity in the music industry is still scarce, the available information highlights an ongoing gender equity deficit indicating that women and gender-diverse music creators continue to face numerous challenges in the industry: 30% artists in the 2022 Billboard 100 were women or gender non-binary, though only 14% of songwriters represented on the chart were women<sup>6</sup>. Only few research studies dedicated to gender-diversity in the music industry take place on a regular basis, such as the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative's Inclusion in the Recording Studio Report, female:pressure's Facts Survey or Believe and TuneCore's BE THE CHANGE Study. The lack of statistical gender disaggregated data that is specific to the music industry at national or European level makes it difficult to get a full picture of the situation of music professionals, which in turn makes it hard to measure the impact of programmes dedicated to bringing change.

There is however a need that has been acknowledged by music industry professionals: *"Women (+42%) and transgender individuals (+98%) in the industry are more likely to say that they don't have access to professional training/development opportunities. There are also barriers to entry into the industry as only 41% of industry professionals and creators recommend a career in the music industry today (an additional 22% would recommend a career in the industry if it advanced gender equality)."*<sup>7</sup>.

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*"When you can include data in the conversation, it makes things easier for the people you need to speak to within the music industry- and obviously in most countries the data is missing. But if our talk about change is based on quantitative and qualitative data, then it is not a subjective view any more"*

(Tanya Korenika, Innovator, Estonia, 2023 cohort)

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While imbalances and inequalities in the music industry require systemic change, this change requires time. Keychange works from the bottom-up empowering women and gender-diverse professionals in the industry to become more resilient, resourceful and better connected to develop their careers. But at the same time, Keychange focuses on addressing gender equity on the system-level. As one of the festival partners joining Keychange mentioned reflecting on why they joined Keychange:

6. Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters, & Producers across 1,100 Popular Songs from 2012 to 2022. Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper, Karla Hernandez & Sam Wheeler, Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (January 2023), <https://annenberg.usc.edu/research/aii#research-areas-and-reports>

7. BE THE CHANGE, TuneCore, Believe and Luminare, 2023 - <https://www.tunecore.com/what-is-tunecore#be-the-change>

“

*“We had realised that gender equity can only be tackled at a broader international initiative. And Keychange was exactly that.”*

(Helen Sildna, Founder and Managing Director Tallinn Music Week)

”

Understanding gender inequity is a global issue which requires action on a global scale, the Keychange Pledge was launched in 2018 with an open invitation to signatories from all countries to commit to gender equity in the coming years. As more and more signatories from all sectors within the music industry joined, the requirement to achieve gender parity became only the cornerstone of the pledge. As of September 2023 the Keychange Pledge has been updated with intersectional considerations to be suggested to signatories which look into supporting women and gender-diverse artists and innovators from different racial, cultural, socio-economic and disability backgrounds, with consideration for the environment as well.

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*“Keychange should have a wider diversity focus. This should be our most important role with non-binary artists and innovators when talking about underrepresented voices. And we cannot talk about gender equality or inclusion if we don't talk about global voices, especially when we are talking about music.”*

(Laura Camacho Salgado, Head of international, seminar, and delegate programme Oslo World)

”



# What Keychange participants suggest

On strategies for the Keychange movement to fulfil its mission in the future:

Both the external evaluation survey and the consultations conducted through the research revealed that the participants believe Keychange should prioritise the following elements:

- Synergies with more music industry organisations (97%)
- More opportunities for international mobility and networking (94%)
- Monitoring of the implementation of the Pledge (94%)
- Showcasing opportunities for artists (94%)
- Improved intersectional representation within the Keychange team (90%)
- More opportunities for transfer of knowledge from industry players that have experience in the field (90%)
- Resources for the establishment of a Keychange alumni (90%)
- Mentoring (87%)

On changing paradigms regarding gender equity in the music industry:

Based on the external evaluation survey and confirmed through the consultations, 87.1% of respondents believe that there is a need for increased awareness of intersectional barriers to progression in the music industry.

Respondents consider that to achieve gender equity in the music industry the following is needed:

- increased funding opportunities from the public sector (100%)
- increased funding support from industry stakeholders (97%)
- a legal framework for gender equity (97%)
- increased storytelling practices from the sector itself (87%)

# Recommendations

In addition to the highlighted evaluation considerations, the research outcome suggests the following steps to maximise the influence of Keychange and shape its future editions. The research distinguishes these recommendations on three levels. “Micro” pertains to the talent development programme. “Meso” pertains to the partners and organisations participating in Keychange and/or endorsing the Pledge. “Macro” denotes the ongoing efforts that Keychange should continue to undertake in order to contribute to the necessary transformation for a more equitable music industry.

## On the “Micro” level<sup>8</sup>

Exploring the possibility of creating a more tailor-made programme for the participants

- Consider the option of having sessions dedicated only to artists or innovators and workshop-style sessions rather than lectures/training. Although this would require more coordination from the Keychange team, it would stimulate more conversations among them based on their professional / personal needs.
- Maintain the involvement of other actors with expertise in the field that provide specialised support to participants (such as mentoring with shesaid, so which has been highly valued by participants).
- Transfer part of the agency to the participants by making them co-responsible for their own ‘learning curve’ within the programme.

Curating more opportunities for exchanges and smaller group meetings among Keychange participants

- Consider lowering the intensity of the programme, especially during the full meet-ups, as it can be overwhelming for some of the participants—especially those with neurodivergence, mental health challenges and/ or caring responsibilities.
- Allow more relaxed, unplanned moments for natural networking and connections to take place.
- Showcase examples of previous Keychange participants that made the best out of the programme by inviting them to different sessions to present their own journey.
- Considering pairing Keychange artists with innovators for testing possible collaborations during their participation in the showcases.

8. Recommendations from Participants

## Communication and reporting

- Highlight more stories of Keychange participants on social media while emphasising their development after participating in Keychange.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation indicators to report on their progress on a yearly basis.
- Being mindful about how Keychange is positioned as a driver for gender equity in the music industry recognising the effort of other key initiatives in the field.

## Finding the right balance between widening and deepening

- Today Keychange has run a programme over 4 cohorts (2018, 2020–21, 2022, 2023) and has included over 280 individuals. While having 74 participants per cohort might be a great achievement and be appealing both to participants and potential partners and funders, it has a toll on the Keychange management team which is sometimes felt by the participants as well. Finding the right balance for orienting the team's efforts is therefore important.

### Widening would mean:

- Continuing to reach a high number of participants per cohort and giving further opportunities to gender-diverse people to participate in Keychange.
- Reaching to other European countries, where the discussion about gender equity is not yet in the spotlight.
- Reaching out to participants from Latin America, SWANA and Africa as the geographic areas identified by the people interviewed.

### Deepening would mean:

- Focusing on cultivating a vivid alumnae community providing resources and services that would benefit the Keychange participants in the long-run but would also provide the necessary stimuli for the creation of more active local/national/regional groups. Explore opportunities for allocating necessary financial resources to compensate for this work.
- Establishing systems for monitoring the professional development and the connections among members on a yearly basis.
- Giving opportunities for physical meetups among alumni.



## A more intersectional language and approach

- A lot has changed in the industry since 2017 when Keychange started and while there is some progress concerning women in the music industry, gender equity has definitely not been achieved yet. There is still a long way to go in order for women and gender-diverse people to be better represented in the industry- both in line ups and performances, as well as in leading positions.
- Keychange's reality has also spurred the team to adapt the language and practices used to be more intersectional in their approach. Seen as a learning process, the Keychange team has gained significant experience in considering how the vocabulary and practices can be more inclusive. More effort is required to achieve this in order to also serve as a paradigm for both participants and the industry alike.
- Invite more representative speakers from gender-diverse communities as speakers/ mentors.
- Consider creating safer spaces for exchange also with male representatives from the music industry in smaller workshops and not only engaging them as speakers/ trainers. This would be on an equal basis- in order to break silos when talking about gender equity.
- Lead by example diversifying the Keychange management team.

## On the “Meso” level

### Supporting Keychange partners in their own gender equity journey

- Look beyond the operational role of Keychange core partners and provide more time for interaction among them in regard to their own gender equity practices in a peer-learning process.
- Test a model of monitoring progress in gender equity among partners that can be exportable to other Pledge signatories.
- Sharing with partners more updated information on the evolution of the Keychange initiative, especially on the career development of participants and on the Pledge.

### Providing clearer frameworks for cooperation

- Create a manual for hosting festivals on what to expect and how to better engage with Keychange and the hosted artists and innovators.
- Ensure that Keychange festivals are properly resourced to help hosted artists and innovators navigate the various opportunities offered.

## On the “Macro” level

### Making a case for the progress regarding gender equity of organisations in the industry

- Provide updated information regarding the Pledge. Not only regarding the growing number of signatories, but on concrete examples of action taken by specific signatories towards achieving gender equity in their organisation.
- Compile good practices, conduct interviews and adopt a more storytelling approach in narrating the achievements and the commitment of the sector.
- Develop a framework and provide support to monitor progress towards gender equity for the Pledge signatories.

### Identify further opportunities to enhance the visibility of Keychange

- Call on partners to work with Keychange to engage influential figures in the music industry and extend conversations to regions where such dialogues are lacking.
- Make wider use of a resource hub, consolidating various initiatives, toolkits, articles, and feminist readings that could be useful for Keychange participants and the broader music industry.
- Seek further partnerships with other organisations and initiatives sharing similar goals for more impactful advocacy campaigns.

### Pushing the ‘beyond gender’ narrative further

- Keychange has moved beyond the ‘50-50’ narrative to a “50%+ representation of women and gender-diverse people” and has been advocating for a more intersectional approach when considering inequalities in the music industry. Keychange should further encourage the sector to take an intersectional approach to inclusion, considering intersections of gender and race/ ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability, and neurodiversity among others.
- Conduct further research to gather evidence on intersectional barriers in the music industry, particularly in regions where this information is scarce.

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