Creative Economy

Developing the Creative Industries in Uzbekistan

9 June 2023

Table of Contents

[Introduction 3](#_Toc137149271)

[Background and Aims of the Project 3](#_Toc137149272)

[Overview of the Festival and Events Sector in Uzbekistan 4](#_Toc137149273)

[Approach 5](#_Toc137149274)

[Key Findings 6](#_Toc137149275)

[The Business Environment 6](#_Toc137149276)

[Regional Issues 7](#_Toc137149277)

[Funding 8](#_Toc137149278)

[Regulation 9](#_Toc137149279)

[Skills and Skills Shortages 11](#_Toc137149280)

[Audience Development 11](#_Toc137149281)

[Recommendations 14](#_Toc137149282)

[Overarching Recommendations 14](#_Toc137149283)

[Other Recommendations 14](#_Toc137149284)

[References 16](#_Toc137149285)

[Appendix 17](#_Toc137149286)

# Introduction

### Background and Aims of the Project

This short study was commissioned by the British Council, as part of the second round of Creative Economy Policy projects for Wider Europe undertaken by Counterculture Partnership LLP. It follows on from a previous study completed in May 2022, as part of the first round of projects, which developed a profile of the creative industries in Uzbekistan and produced several practical recommendations to support the further development of the sector.[[1]](#footnote-2) The interviews and research for this study were carried out between January and May 2023.

Following that first report, it was decided as a next step to focus more specifically on the staging and management of major live events and festivals, primarily in music, audio-visual and the performing arts more widely.

Live events are crucial to those subsectors of the creative industries, and there is a growing range of music and arts-based festivals in Uzbekistan. They have a major role to play in promoting the sector, and individual artists and creators, to audiences locally, nationally, and internationally. Events that can build an international profile also have potential to boost inbound tourism, as well as promoting the creative and cultural strengths of Uzbekistan to audiences abroad.

The aims of this study, in summary, were to:

* Set out the overall profile and range of major creative industries-related events in Uzbekistan.
* Identify key opportunities and challenges for current and prospective event organisers in staging events.
* Provide practical recommendations for industry and/or Government to enable further development and growth of live events in Uzbekistan.

The Government has, in the last few years, placed increasing priority on the development and growth of festivals in Uzbekistan - including passing new legislation to expand the range of major events, and financial support for them – as a key element of its focus on the overall development of Uzbekistan’s creative economy. A table summarising this and other recent legislative measures is annexed to this report.

The development of this sector is likely to be one area for further focus in the run-up to the 2024 World Conference on the Creative Economy, which Uzbekistan is hosting. As well as informing action in Uzbekistan, this report could also form the basis for the development of evidence and discussion materials for the World Conference, depending on how the agenda develops.

### Overview of the Festival and Events Sector in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has a diverse and growing year-round festival and events offer, with many of the most popular activities celebrating the country’s rich cultural heritage and traditions. The sector is increasingly seen by government as important, both culturally and economically; and as a potentially important driver for inbound tourism and international brand-building. A recent edition of the Uzbekistan Airways Magazine suggested that Uzbekistan “should turn into a country of festivals”[[2]](#footnote-3).

The range of festivals and similar events is increasing and encompasses both celebrations of Uzbekistan’s strong cultural traditions and more contemporary forms. Some illustrative examples (many promoted in the UA Magazine) are:

* Music festivals including:
* The Sharq Taronalari (Samarkand) which is one of the largest in Central Asia and was created to celebrate the traditional music and dancing of Uzbekistan, and to showcase artistic excellence from around the world.
* The Stihia electronic music event, originated in Muynak, Karakalpakstan near the Aral Sea
* The International Jazz Festival (7th edition in 2023), hosted in Tashkent with around 20 concerts from local and international artists.
* **MOC Fest**, a free arts festival aimed at popularising the contemporary arts of Uzbekistan, linked to the MOC creative hub in Tashkent
* **Tashkent international film festival**, running between 1968-1997 and resumed in 2021, promotes films from Uzbekistan’s and elsewhere, and includes the “Movie in 5 Days” competition for aspiring film-makers from across the world.
* Held since 2002, **Boysun Bahori (Surkhandarya**) highlights Uzbekistan’s rich cultural heritage, including folk ensembles, circus pageantry, theatre, and traditional sports.
* The **National Folk Games** festival in the Bukhara region, with theatrical performances (dance, entertainment) by folklore groups from across Uzbekistan, alongside fairs and national games.
* **Silk and Spices Festival** in Bukhara, a vital stop on the Great Silk Road, celebrates Uzbekistan’s cultural traditions and the developments of folk arts and crafts, with mass festivities incorporating dance and music.

Many of the key festivals are directly commissioned and funded by Government: these tend to be focused on Uzbekistan’s traditional music and arts. There is also a growing range of independently organised events, often focusing on more contemporary forms of music, film, and other performing arts.

A 2021 Presidential Decree *‘On Measures to Further Enhance the Role and Importance of Culture and Art in the Life of Society’* underlined the Government’s commitment to developing the festival and events sector, consistent with its ambition to ‘modernise culture and art and provide training, talent development and improved educational resources for youth, as well as increased cultural services and activities especially in remote areas’. This decree set in hand detailed planning and budgeting for a substantial programme of events, with clear responsibilities placed on the Ministry of Culture, regional and city authorities, and others to ensure delivery. Most state-sponsored events are free to attend, but there is a desire to explore more financially sustainable models for the longer term. This is also a key issue for the promoters of independent events who do not receive Government subsidy.

### Approach

The evidence, information, and experiences on which our findings and recommendations are based, was gathered via three separate but complementary strands of activity carried out between January and May 2023:

* Desk Research: a review of publicly available information on live events/festival scene in Uzbekistan and the Government’s approach to its development.
* Questionnaire: a short, written questionnaire sent to a range of industry figures involved in running and/or participating in events, to gain an initial overview of the range of issues and perspectives across the creative industries.
* Site Visit: A series of 1:1 and small group Interviews with key players involved in the Uzbekistan events ecology, held in person in Tashkent. Interviewees included, among others, both organisers of larger established festivals, and entrepreneurs working to develop new events independently, from scratch.

The outcome of these three strands is brought together in this final report, which includes some recommendations for further action by both Government and Industry, to enable the further growth and better management of major events.

The next section summarises the views and evidence gathered through our research, and our views on its implications. This analysis feeds into a set of practical recommendations for industry, Government, and other key bodies to consider and take forward in cooperation with each other.

We have brigaded our findings under six headings, reflecting key thematic issues which were repeatedly cited by our interviewees as particularly critical for the sector’s future: The Business Environment; Regions; Funding; Regulation; Skills; Audience Development.

The project was undertaken by consultants from Counterculture Partnership LLP: Jon Zeff, John Newbigin and Tara Tank, with support from local expert Gunesh Khodjakuli.

# Key Findings

### The Business Environment

Like all post-Soviet States, the government of Uzbekistan has a close and active involvement in the cultural economy of the country. In soviet times, cultural activity was mainly State-sponsored or private and amateur – there was very little significant commercial activity. Thirty years on, the legacy of this approach persists and impacts significantly on the skills, finance, regulation, infrastructure, and mindset required to drive what is, nonetheless, a growing commercial sector. But the growth is unevenly distributed. Other than in Tashkent with its more sophisticated and cosmopolitan population, our respondents told us there is still a limited demand for or expectation of independent, commercially priced festivals or performing arts events. State-funded cultural events are often free, with the consequence that ticket-pricing, ticketing systems, audience analysis and targeted marketing are all less fully developed than they might be. Furthermore, State-supported performances and exhibitions generally prioritise size of audience as the key metric of success and so tend towards the uncontentious and mainstream in terms of content, with a strong emphasis on traditional arts, crafts, and art-forms, making it more difficult for commercial promoters to build a well-informed and critical audience for contemporary arts practice.

Several of our respondents told us that what might be called more experimental and innovative events have difficulty in finding audiences outside Tashkent and one or two other major cities. They resented the frequently close official scrutiny of events and performers but emphasised that this lack of risk-taking and experiment was often an inevitable consequence of unimaginative and cautious programming rather than formal or informal censorship. One said “…it might not be government restrictions but just one person or institution that doesn’t understand the value of certain arts events”. Another commented ruefully with regard to arts and culture, that “Uzbekistan’s biggest advantage is its strong traditions, and its biggest disadvantage is its strong traditions”.

Many of our respondents told us that another issue is that State-supported events are often announced and presented with very little notice but can claim precedence in booking venues, thereby creating a significant problem for commercial promoters who must live with the constant uncertainty of losing venues they have booked or cancellation of the events[[3]](#footnote-4) – and therefore the inevitable financial and reputational consequences. We were told of another problem – by no means unique to Uzbekistan – that artists and support staff who have been booked to perform in government-sponsored events often endure slow and late payment of fees and expenses. This, perhaps, is another hangover from soviet times when artists were expected to perform at State-sponsored events without payment and risked being marginalised if they declined. Despite these numerous obstacles, promoters said they feel the government recognises the need for change and is ambitious to see the growth of a more commercially sustainable model for cultural events, especially major events and festivals that have the potential to attract international audiences and therefore foreign exchange.

### Regional Issues

Like most other countries, artistic activity, skills, resources, and infrastructure in Uzbekistan are heavily concentrated in the capital, Tashkent, and in a handful of other urban centres such as Samarkand with its rich heritage of traditional arts and crafts, although major international festivals are beginning to be a feature in other parts of the country, including the extraordinary annual Stihia Festival on the shores of the Aral Sea. An additional factor in this regional imbalance is language; many of our respondents commented that most cultural activity is presented in Russian, or even English, but away from Tashkent and a few other cities, audiences want and expect performance to be in Uzbek and their cultural experience is likely to be limited to traditional arts and art forms or limited simply by lack of exposure to live cultural experiences. For example, one music promoter told us that audiences were so accustomed to listening to recorded music that they placed a low premium on the value of hearing singers performing live. Other respondents told us there was a shortage of quality venues in the regions, especially mid-size venues, with corresponding difficulties in locating quality technical equipment or suitably qualified technicians and support staff. This meant that larger events and live performers in the regions were often dependent on equipment and back-stage staff having to come from Tashkent, with the associated costs of poor transport links and long distances; - the Stihia Festival, for example, takes place 1,300 kms distant from the capital.

On a more positive note, several of our respondents emphasised that some regional administrations were supportive of greater arts and cultural provision but had limited autonomy in booking performances, supporting independent artists, or finding the capital resources to improve their infrastructure. A general lack of cultural sophistication meant that they often did not know what they wanted. Given the government’s wider commitment to fostering a growing and more widespread tourist industry, with facilities that would attract both domestic and international visitors, there would seem to be good opportunities to work with city mayors and other regional leaders to stimulate cultural offers that could celebrate the traditions, history, or geography of parts of the country. The Stihia Festival is an obvious example of how a combination of factors, including the diversity and exotic quality of Aral’s see landscape and sustainable agenda of the festival might provide the basis for regional or city-level culture-led regeneration strategies.

We were told that some of the international cultural bodies with active programmes in Uzbekistan, including the British Council, Goethe Institute and Swiss Cooperation Office, had helped promote arts and cultural events in the regions and that the positive impact of this could perhaps be enhanced by these agencies working in closer collaboration with each other. Some of our respondents referenced the government’s support policies for traditional crafts, including training subsidies and tax incentives to sustain craft production in the regions, pointing out that if the same approach was taken to contemporary arts and live events it could make a greater variety of cultural experience accessible to communities across the country. They also pointed out that the recent Presidential decree made it easier to present major cultural events. While this had been done primarily to support the growth of international tourism, coupled with its stated desire to make more State-supported events and festivals financially self-sustaining, it also showed that the government was prepared to take action to support new approaches to developing the country’s cultural sector.

### Funding

The Government has made a clear commitment to expanding the number and range of large-scale cultural and artistic events, adopting a resolution in 2022 which sets out detailed requirements for central and regional authorities to develop, fund and deliver calendars of major events. These include music festivals, theatre tours and circus performances. This is partly driven by a desire to increase inbound tourism to Uzbekistan but is also a product of the increasing priority placed on developing the country’s creative economy, seen as key to Uzbekistan’s future economy and cultural development. Many of the biggest festivals in Uzbekistan, particularly those based on more traditional artforms, are largely state funded. There is public funding available for the development and staging of new festivals, although we understand that the appetite for supporting new events varies among local authorities. However, we were told that state funding tends to come with a significant burden of additional requirements: these were both administrative (e.g., late payments, last-minute organisation) and content-related (scrutiny of, and constraints placed on event programmes and performers.). It seems that this deters many organisers, particularly of independent and more contemporary events, from seeking official financial support. One respondent noted that “working with Government is a good experience if you don’t take money from them”.

Furthermore, we were told that - consistent with the findings in our previous report – many organisations, and individual performers, involved in events are not officially registered, largely because taxation levels are perceived to be very high, to a level which could render small and growing creative businesses unviable. This can bring additional challenges to the process of organising major events, including booking performers: one agency we spoke to noted that it was “difficult to work with performers as they want to work only with cash”. We were told that the combination of VAT and company taxes, and the relatively low threshold for higher tax rates (around US$90k), could be a deterrent to staging of new festivals and concert tours, which are often organised as single stand-alone events – not least because it increased pressure to raise ticket prices beyond affordability for many citizens. The upshot is that many of the biggest and more traditional festivals are state funded, and often free to attend, but that funding is a bigger challenge for those wanting to organise independent, more contemporary events, which often start small and grow over time. There were calls for the authorities to review the tax framework affecting events, and in particular for consideration of possible incentives to encourage and enable creative entrepreneurs developing new independent events.

On the positive side, we heard from several stakeholders that the desire to remain independent of Government subsidy had led to some success in attracting support from wider partners, including international organisations such as the British Council, and commercial sponsors. We heard from networks of events organisers who were placing an increasing focus on collaboration around fundraising, and said they were gaining in experience and in their ability to build strategic relationships with commercial brands. There was a clear sense that opportunities for securing funding from non-Government sources were growing and becoming more accessible, but there was a need to build stronger and wider networks across the events sector to sustain this. In particular, it was recognised that securing commercial partners required new skills, such as how to engage with commercial marketing departments; and how to make the case for investment in terms, for example, of added value and brand recognition. It was also noted that, as small festivals grew, there was an increasing need to build capacity and capability around direct marketing to audiences and ticket sales. As noted above, building audiences who are willing and able to pay for tickets becomes more challenging outside the major cities.

We understand that the Government is itself interested in developing more financially sustainable models for state-sponsored events, so there may be scope for organisers of independent and Government funded events to collaborate on developing more commercial models and the skills needed to make them work.

### Regulation

We understand that all events with expected audiences of more than 100 people require official permission from Government (at city/regional level). There are also central licensing requirements for organisers and performers. Many of the people we interviewed spoke about their experiences of the authorisation process and had views on how it could be improved. The experiences we heard were mixed: our overall impression was that the process for obtaining permission is not as transparent as it could be, and that navigating it successfully is dependent in part on building relationships with the decision-making body. We noticed, for example, that there were differences of understanding on the exact level of the audience thresholds above which official permission is required. This may be an indication that authoritative guidance on the processes for seeking and obtaining authorisation is not as easy to access as it could be (or at least that event’s organisers are not familiar with it).

A consistent message was that the process of securing permission can be disproportionately onerous and slow to complete. Information provided by the Tashkent Department of Internal Affairs indicates that the primary issues to be scrutinised in processing an application are around public safety and security – for example ensuring that standards of fire safety are met, and that essential first-aid kit is accessible[[4]](#footnote-5). However, in practice, it seems that precise requirements which events need to meet, potentially under a combination of authorisation and licensing conditions, can be unpredictable, and authority officials sometimes wish to scrutinise the event programme and arrangements in much greater detail. One interviewee noted that official scrutiny could include checks on “what are the song lyrics and how the performer is going to be dressed”.

Several stakeholders commented that developing good relationships with authority officials had proven particularly important in securing permission for events. One interviewee said that an application to the City authorities “could be buried there unless you have a friend there who can directly investigate the status of the application and help to push it through.” Another interviewee noted that securing external partners and commercial sponsors was often helpful in reassuring officials of an event’s credentials, reducing the level of detailed questions and demands for information made before granting permission.

It seems from our interviews that this reliance on personal relationships is a critical factor in determining how quickly and easily official approval can be secured. The effect of that is likely to be that the approval system favours established events and those with sponsorship from high-profile partners but is more difficult to navigate for entrepreneurs looking to develop new programmes. We spoke to several people working to develop new festivals, with credible ambitions to reach and educate new audiences. They struck us as highly creative and resourceful, with great potential to develop high quality and innovative events. However, several were concerned about the prospect of seeking official approval and were therefore deterred from growing their events to the point where they would attract scrutiny.

There was a perception among many involved in independent events, that seeking permission or financial support from Government bodies, would attract unwelcome scrutiny – which could lead, effectively, to censorship – of the programme and content. It was noted that official State-sponsored events tended to have more traditional, conservative, programmes, and that authorities paid particularly close attention to other events which had substantial Government funding and therefore might include a Government logo in their branding and communications. It was also recognised that there was a genuine commitment on the part of the Government to encourage support the growth – in breadth as well as depth - of the festivals and events sector in Uzbekistan. Indeed, some told us that the process for seeking permission had recently started to get easier. Nevertheless, concerns about official intervention in the content of event programmes was seen still seen by some as a material deterrent to accessing Government support, particularly for those wanting to build new events (“My one recommendation is to let us work and don’t intervene”).

This broad concern about the risk of attracting unwelcome scrutiny over the artistic content of events could have a wider “chilling” effect too, on events which are not funded or closely scrutinised by Government. We heard anecdotal accounts of instances where organisers had themselves exercised censorship over the programmes or performances at their own events, to avoid the inclusion of material which they thought would meet with disapproval and could lead to unwelcome consequences. Thus, regardless of whether such fears are well-founded, the perception of risk that such restrictions may be imposed, can have a restraining impact on the artistic range and quality – and the profile – of contemporary, and innovative arts events in Uzbekistan.

Greater transparency and structure around the processes for seeking approval and wider official support, could be a significant step forward in helping to address these challenges. We recommend that the Government, in close consultation with local authorities and industry leaders, should review these processes with the aim of standardising and simplifying them, to minimise the administrative burdens on applicants and make the system work equally smoothly for all applicants. This should be accompanied by clear published guidelines.

We also heard some examples from industry leaders of existing efforts to develop networks of events organisers who can share experience and expertise between them and cooperate where appropriate in working with Government and other authorities. Strong sector-based networks of this kind can play a big role in educating and guiding businesses and developing communities of mutual support, to the benefit of the sector as a whole. These organisations can play a particularly important role in supporting new entrepreneurs in the early stages of establishing and growing their creative businesses. Industry should consider how such networks might be developed further in Uzbekistan’s creative industries.

Over the course of our interviews, we met several self-starting entrepreneurs who were developing new, innovative festivals focussing on areas of the arts which they felt were underexposed in Uzbekistan. We were very impressed with their passion, commitment and capability, and their ambitions to grow and reach new audiences. This suggests that there is substantial entrepreneurial creative talent in Uzbekistan which, with the right support and encouragement from both Government and industry, could make a big contribution to the growth and profile of Uzbekistan's arts and creative industries, both domestically and internationally.

### Skills and Skills Shortages

We asked a range of leading promoters, impresarios, and trainers to fill in a questionnaire that included specific questions on skills and skills needs (see Annex 2 [to be attached]). We received a dozen responses. The response was very varied but, overall, suggested that in general our respondents felt they had access to skilled staff, though with plenty of room for improvement, and a recognition from those with international ambitions that they needed higher level skills if they were to succeed in breaking into new markets with any degree of confidence. On the other hand, the erratic spread of responses to our questions also suggested an element of ‘you don’t know what you don’t know’. The prevailing culture of free events means that specialist areas of marketing, ticketing, audience analysis are under-developed, and perhaps unrecognised, along with the potential of ancillary income streams from food and beverage or merchandise. Problems of effective logistical management of large-scale events suggest a lack of sophisticated provision for security and it was clear that relatively little attention has been paid to the need for insurance – this may be another consequence of an events market that is still substantially split between events that are under-written by government, and therefore in less need of insurance cover, and unofficial or semi-official events whose modest scale makes insurance a very secondary consideration.

Fund-raising, specialist investment and sponsorship were all raised as issues that needed new and better skills if the emerging commercial market is to grow and while the country has sophisticated marketing and advertising agencies, several of our respondents felt they were not sufficiently geared to the particular needs of promoting live events or charged prices that few arts promoters were able to afford. In general, the responses indicated a good level of technical and managerial skill and access to quality technology for small and medium scale events, coupled with a reliance on imported skills, and sometimes equipment, for large and very large events, especially those in the open air. Several respondents said they could access this kind of expertise by recruiting Uzbeks who were working abroad, adding that these skilled workers were often happy to return to Uzbekistan for particular events, with the bonus that many of them accepted being paid at local rates, rather than the higher rates they could expect abroad. But, more generally, there was a sense that the market was hampered by the absence of an agency or network that could bring together a data base of specialists and specialist skills.

When it came to views about existing training provision for the full range of technical, creative, and managerial skills needed for the events and exhibitions business, there was more unanimity from our respondents. They cited examples of training modules on offer from commercial bodies within Uzbekistan and from international players such as branch of Moscow State University in Tashkent, though at least one promoter complained that the limited number of skilled and experienced events operators in the country were sometimes reluctant to share their expertise for fear of stimulating competition, even though a more generous approach would help to grow the overall market. We were told that the quality of much undergraduate level education and training was inadequate. This was attributed to a combination of teachers who lacked practical industry experience and an absence of informed demand; - for example, a summer school for arts managers organised by the University of Westminster generated relatively little interest and no follow-up.

### Audience Development

As we found in our previous study, there continues to be a lack of familiarity with or critical appreciation of contemporary arts, including independent cinema and music. Our respondents told us that most audiences in Uzbekistan prefer ‘more familiar’ and traditional artforms. This is seen as a legacy of the soviet period with its limitations on creative expression and its formal education system, but some of our respondents expressed concern that students are still not given sufficient opportunity to experience or participate in cultural events. This cultural conservatism inevitably shapes the ambitions of festival and event’s organisers who are seeking to connect local and emerging artists with local audiences. However, at least one of our interviewees said that contemporary arts audiences numbers were growing annually, coupled with a broader appreciation of ‘culture’, ‘new culture’ and ‘underground culture’ (the latter now becoming more popular).

A major barrier for independent promoters is ticket costs for everything from festivals to cinema admissions. This is exacerbated by the fact that many State-sponsored events are free. Our survey indicated ticket prices range from 40,000 to 1.5million UZ Som with an average price between 100,000 Som (£7) and 250,000Som (£17.50) depending on the size of event and whether it is local, regional, national, or international. With the country’s average monthly wage estimated at 3,9 mln. Som[[5]](#footnote-6) it’s evident that commercial events are restricted to a limited and mainly urban audience. A related issue is audience size, with many independent events only able to attract small crowds of between 100-200, or less. Audience numbers change dramatically when online platforms are also used, although we heard little about organisers’ ability to monetise their online presence. This highlights the much larger issue of a very unsophisticated market in terms of targeted marketing, online ticketing systems, audience analytics and CRM systems.

Another related issue concerns affordability, especially for regions away from Tashkent where wages are relatively lower (see the previous paragraph). There were mixed views about the desirability of hosting free events as a way of growing audiences and thereby developing a more commercially sustainable market, and almost all our survey respondents said they host free events, subject to the availability of resources, partners, and talent. Most welcomed the many free government-sponsored events such as the Symphony Orchestra tour and rock concerts in the regions as good for audience development. Less welcome was the feeling that government-subsidised events were artistically cautious and unimaginative, poorly promoted and often arranged with little planning or advance publicity. This, in turn, contributed to an underdeveloped culture of good marketing and promotions.

Many of our respondents shared the government's own view that festivals, particularly festivals with international reach and appeal, are a good way to build the country’s profile, promote tourism and help the market to mature. But as well as concerns about inadequate planning and marketing, there are understandable concerns about building management and production expertise to meet international standards, combined with the difficulty of paying international standard fees in what is still an emerging economy. Another concern we heard expressed was that a focus on major festivals that aim to attract an international audience may do relatively little to benefit or help grow the domestic audience.

This concern is well illustrated by the issue of language. As we note elsewhere, Russian, or even English is often the language of choice for many contemporary arts events. While this appeals to the more sophisticated and cosmopolitan audiences of Tashkent and perhaps one or two other cities, audiences in the regions want and expect events to be in Uzbek. This, in turn, perpetuates the prevalence of more traditional and ‘familiar’ arts and cultural experiences available in the regions and makes it more difficult for independent promoters of the contemporary arts to find commercially viable audiences in the regions.

This combination of geography, language, the tradition of State-supported events that are free to the public means that nearly every aspect of audience development, marketing and market analysis needs support and investment, for both live and virtual audiences.

# Recommendations

### Overarching Recommendations

* We recommend a comprehensive review of processes for obtaining permission and associated licensing requirements, particularly for small and medium-scale events. This should aim to:
* Simplify the process and reduce the cost of imposed requirements, especially for small and medium-scale events.
* Maximise the transparency of decision-making processes, including the provision of accessible guidance on key steps, the information required, and the criteria considered in decisions.
* A joint government/industry working group should be formed to discuss the practical scope of such changes and, more widely, as a regular forum to discuss key issues and develop shared priorities for the development of the sector.
* Alongside this, creative industry leaders should promote the growth of industry-wide networks with the aim of:
* Enabling exchange of information and sharing of experiences in staging events
* Building collective understanding of best practice
* Providing mutual support and guidance and, in particular, a trusted source of advice, particularly for newer, less experienced entrepreneurs.

### Other Recommendations

#### Business Environment

* Government and industry should consider development of an accessible national database of experts, service companies, equipment suppliers and venues.
* Consideration should be given to implementing a “prompt payment” rule for public sector funders and contractors, under which they would commit to paying all invoices and expense claims within 30 days of issue.
* Bursaries could be established for promoters to learn more about international markets and audiences.

#### Regions

* Government, at national and regional level should develop an integrated strategy for culture/festival-based tourism, to maximise the contribution of creative industry events in attracting tourists to Uzbekistan and its regions.
* Consideration should be given to additional government support for arts development in the regions away from the capital. Areas to pursue could include accessible and available venues, the role of subsidies, and plans for development of local and regional culture plans.
* British Council and other international agencies could collaborate on offering support for arts in the regions, including hosting workshops for regional city mayors and others on developing and managing city and region-based arts and culture strategies.

#### Funding

* Industry-wide networks (see above) should facilitate the exchange of advice and guidance on the development of commercial/sponsorship models, for both subsidised and independent events.
* Government should review the tax burden on new and growing events and consider the case for reduction or incentives to boost viability – and chances of success – particularly for smaller and newer festivals, in earlier stages of development, which are looking to build their audiences.

#### Regulation

* Comprehensive and readily accessible guidance should be developed – and followed – on the process and criteria for granting approval for major live events.

#### Skills

* Government and industry should develop industry-led programmes to support development of key audience-focused skills needs across creative businesses involved in organising festivals and similar events, including:
* Marketing
* Ticketing
* CRM
* Audience development and analytics
* Events management, including logistics, exhibition design, security, insurance
* Higher Education institutions should seek to employ more practitioner/teachers to ensure that creative industry courses are relevant, up to date and include practical opportunities to develop commercial and business skills.

#### School Curriculum

* Consideration should be given to including visits to theatre, music, and other live performances as part of every school student’s experience at primary and secondary level.

# References

#### Report References

Counterculture Partnership LLP & British Council (2022) Recommendations for the Development of the Creative Industries in Uzbekistan. Online at <https://www.britishcouncil.uz/sites/default/files/mapping-uzbekistan-creative-industries-english.pdf>

Department Of Internal Affairs, City of Tashkent (n.d.) Public and Events Protection. Online at <https://iibb.uz/en/menu/zhamoat-tartibini-salash-hizmati>

Uzbekistan Airways (2022) Inflight Magazine, Uzbekistan Airways (November Issue)

#### Appendix References

The National Centre of Legal Information (1996) Edict - On the Formation of the Touring and Concert Association "Uzbeknavo". Online at <https://lex.uz/en/docs/175425>.

The National Centre of Legal Information (2019) Decree - Measures to Hold the International Festival of Folk Applied Arts. Online at <https://lex.uz/docs/5339494>.

The National Centre of Legal Information (2020) Edict - On Measures to Further Enhance the Role and Importance of Culture and Art in the Life of Society. Online at <https://lex.uz/en/docs/4829338>.

National Centre of Legal Information (2021) Decree - Measures to Further Improve the System of Support for Handicraft Activities. Online at <https://lex.uz/docs/5807576>.

The National Centre of Legal Information (2022a) Edict - On Creating Additional Conditions for Further Development of Tourism, Culture, Cultural Heritage, and Sports. Online at <https://lex.uz/en/docs/5825010>.

The National Centre of Legal Information (2022b) Decree - On Additional Measures for the Further Development of the Sphere of Culture and Art. Online at <https://lex.uz/en/docs/5849582>.

# Appendix

Summary of recent legislative measures relevant to the development of creative industries festivals in Uzbekistan.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Decree** | **Year** | **Description** |
| On the Formation of the Touring and Concert Association ‘Uzbeknavo’[[6]](#footnote-7) | 1996 | A creative and production association overseen by the government, supporting the development of musical and dance art including international networks, coordination of tours and funding oversight. |
| Measures to Hold the International Festival of Folk Applied Arts[[7]](#footnote-8) | 2019 | To host the inaugural **International Festival of Folk Applied Arts** under UNESCO in Kokand and support sector development in the country including through education and national identity building.  Actions:   * To host the festival every two years with a specific scientific and practical conference. * To introduce talent attraction programme with exhibitions and competitions in the run up to the festival. * To promote brand ‘Kokand – the city of artisans of the world’ and opportunities for tourism   Support for intergenerational knowledge-transfer, education, and career routes to mastery. |
| On Measures to Further Enhance the Role and Importance of Culture and Art in the Life of Society[[8]](#footnote-9) | 2020 | To modernise culture and art and provide training, talent development and improved educational resources for youth, as well as increased cultural services and activities especially in remote areas.  Actions:   * **Event licensing** monitoring through a centralised portal. * **Mass events** to be held based on annual approved calendar. * Prohibiting the **volunteering** of creative figures and performers to state-led events. * **Rental subsidies** for live concert programmes in state buildings. * Measures to support **protection of copyright** include the development of dedicated Chamber. |
| Measures to Further Improve the System of Support for Handicraft Activities[[9]](#footnote-10) | 2021 | The aims include exploiting uncovered opportunities in the mahalla (‘neighbourhood’) system, fostering knowledge exchange between artisans, identifying new sales markets, education, and youth employment in makhallas (specifically through tradition of ‘usta-shogird’).  Action:  To create **trade pavilions** for handicraft products in Tashkent, Nukus and regional centres focusing on international exports and tourist routes (foreign and domestic). |
| On Creating Additional Conditions for Further Development of Tourism, Culture, Cultural Heritage, and Sports[[10]](#footnote-11) | 2022 | Accelerating the development of the infrastructure, effective operation of facilities and conducive conditions for population based on earlier decree.[[11]](#footnote-12)  Actions:   * Grants to support youth entrepreneurial activities including participation in **tourist exhibitions (domestic) and international fairs.** |
| Resolution on Additional Measures for the Further Development of the Sphere of Culture and Art | 2022 | Sets out detailed expectations, and an overall budget contribution, for “mass cultural, concert and entertainment events” to be held in 2022 and gives detailed responsibilities to the Ministry of Culture and leaders of Regional and City Governments to organise and promote events. |

1. Counterculture Partnership LLP & British Council (2022) <https://www.britishcouncil.uz/en/programmes/arts/mapping-creative-industries-uzbekistan> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Uzbekistan Airways (2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Here the link to the article in Russian about cancelation of the events in Tashkent, which was published after finalization of the report <https://hook.report/2023/06/prosto-slushay-makomi> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Department Of Internal Affairs, City of Tashkent (n.d.) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Article newspaper “Kursiv”, 28 January, 2023](https://uz.kursiv.media/2023-01-28/srednyaya-zarplata-v-uzbekistane-podnyalas-pochti-do-4-mln-sumov/#:~:text=%D0%92%20%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85%20%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%85%20%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%8B%20%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%83%D1%82,%D0%BC%D0%BB%D0%BD%20(%2B11%2C9%25).) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The National Centre of Legal Information (1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The National Centre of Legal Information (2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The National Centre of Legal Information (2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The National Centre of Legal Information (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The National Centre of Legal Information (2022a) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The National Centre of Legal Information (2022b) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)