



# LEAP

LEGACY IN PROGRESS

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW NARRATIVES

### Beyond Denial: Embracing Storytelling for an Inclusive and Fair Future

**Hybrid Co-Creation Events**  
**September to December 2025 | Belgium and Online**

The Hybrid Co-Creation Event consisted of a series of sessions that brought together artists, community leaders, educators, policymakers, and civil society actors to explore storytelling as a decolonial tool for societal transformation. Through a sequence of interconnected sessions inspired by hackathon methodologies, participants moved from critical reflection to collective problem-solving, generating community-led insights grounded in lived experience and intergenerational memory.

Participants collectively reaffirmed that **storytelling is an instrument of healing, resistance, and regeneration**, and that public institutions must begin to recognise non-traditional knowledge, creativity, and oral histories as essential contributions to policymaking.

The following recommendations represent the key insights co-created during the sessions.

# 1. Resilience Strategies: From Survival to Transformation

## 1.1 Honour Ancestral Strength Without Glorifying Pain

- Acknowledge that descendants of those who survived the transatlantic crossing come from profound strength.
- Use this lineage not to romanticise hardship but to reframe Afro-descendant resilience as dignity, continuity, and collective intelligence, rather than perpetual endurance.

## 1.2 Reject the Normalisation of Suffering

- Policymaking should avoid glorifying resilience.
- A just society must work towards eliminating the conditions that require resilience, prioritising peace, safety, and well-being for all communities.

## 1.3 Reclaim Intergenerational Transmission

- Recognise grandmothers, elders, and community artisans as keepers of knowledge.
- Support arts-based intergenerational projects (storytelling, embroidery, gardening, traditional crafts) as tools for identity, healing, and memory.

## 1.4 Value Diverse Voices and Modes of Expression

- Every individual has a unique voice expressed through words, silence, movement, images, and cultural practice.
- Policies should protect and fund plural forms of expression, enabling communities to articulate their truths.

## 1.5 Encourage Slowness and Reflection

- Foster educational and community environments that allow people, especially youth, to pause, observe, and reflect.
- Promote mindfulness-based approaches in schools, youth work, and social services.

## 2. Decolonial Awareness: Education, Media, and Collective Memory

### 2.1 Reclaim Narratives and Safeguard Spaces for Authentic Representation

- Strengthen the capacity of Afro-descendant and diasporic organisations to produce, curate, and disseminate their own stories.
- Support long-term collaborations with community-led cultural and educational actors.

### 2.2 Transform School Curricula Through Long-Term Programmes

- Implement regular school workshops addressing decolonial education, systemic biases around race, identity, belonging, and beauty norms.

### 2.3 Continuous Professional Development for Educators

- Quarterly teacher-training workshops, complemented by monthly check-ins.
- Training should include: microaggression response strategies, cultural humility, intersectional awareness, and navigating difficult histories.

### 2.4 Promote Critical, Responsible Storytelling in Media

- Mainstream media should be encouraged and resourced to place stories in historical context, avoid shallow, decontextualised narratives about diaspora communities, counter misinformation, prioritise depth, nuance, and factual integrity.

### 2.5 Encourage the EU to Embrace a Decolonial Lens

- European institutions must acknowledge and communicate colonial history honestly, recognise diaspora communities as integral to Europe's past and future, and strengthen cross-EU diaspora collaboration networks.

### 3. Public Space: Safety, Memory, and Representation

#### 3.1 Recognise Historical Violence in Public Space

- Public authorities should explicitly acknowledge how colonial history shaped violence. This should be considered in the design of public spaces, not to recreate and deepen the effects.
- Symbolic violence in public spaces, which includes erased history, selective memory, or one-sided monuments must be addressed.

#### 3.2 Commit to Inclusive, Peaceful, Participatory Public Spaces

- Authorities must ensure safety for all genders and skin colours, meaningful participation in urban planning, heritage interpretation, and decision-making, and open channels for community consultation.

#### 3.3 Increase Resources for Afro-Descendant Communities

- Ensure access to resources that allow African diaspora organisations to respond to issues affecting them.
- Address structural barriers in housing, employment, and social mobility.

#### 3.4 Diversify Representation in Monumentation and Narratives

- Promote monuments, plaques, and street names honouring racialised and Afro-descendant communities.
- Provide historical objectivity through explanatory signage, digital guides, and open archives.

#### 3.5 Create Shared Narrative Spaces

- Establish physical and metaphorical spaces for collective storytelling, such as: community memory circles, participatory art installations, decolonial city tours and, public libraries hosting lived-experience archive.

## 4. Inclusive Policymaking: Opening Doors Beyond Traditional Voices

### 4.1 Broaden What Counts as Policy Input

- Policymakers should recognise art, music, poetry, oral histories, and embodied practices as legitimate forms of evidence and civic participation.

### 4.2 Prioritise Justice, Equality, and Presence

- Policymakers must be visibly and proactively present where communities face police brutality, healthcare discrimination, institutional bias, and structural racism. Presence is part of accountability.

### 4.3 Ensure Youth Participation With Diversity at the Core

- Create youth advisory bodies, ensuring representation from communities most affected by structural exclusions.
- Guarantee that youth input influences real decision-making, not just consultation.

## 5. Visioning Decolonised Physical Spaces: Key Collective Themes

Participants described decolonised spaces using the following ideas:

- Ancestral Knowledge Restoration
- Agency to Marginalised Voices
- Challenging Imposed Narratives
- Hybrid spaces and reconfigurations
- Heritage, voice, ecosystems
- Learning silenced voices; unlearning fallacies; relearning a cohesive way forward
- Meaningful participation for those most impacted
- Respect, intersubjectivity, shared experience
- Inclusiveness without expectation of personal gain
- Diverse representations acknowledging history's complexity
- Safe, open physical and mental spaces
- Decolonial tours of all European cities

These themes reflect a collective vision: **spaces that restore history, redistribute voice, and make belonging visible.**

The co-creation sessions confirmed that storytelling is far more than a cultural expression. It is a **policy tool, a healing mechanism, and a strategic framework for imagining non-violent futures.**

These recommendations call on EU institutions, Member States, educational systems, urban policymakers, and cultural sectors to embrace a decolonial approach that is honest, inclusive, and future-oriented. Above all, they affirm the need to listen to communities whose voices have been historically marginalised, ensuring that their narratives shape the policies intended to protect them.



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