

ARTS FESTIVALS'



Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue

AN INITIATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN FESTIVALS ASSOCIATION



Entry for EC Call for Ideas: 2008 – European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

Gent, 30 October 2006

Hereby, European Festivals Association (EFA) submits Entry for the European Commission Call for Ideas for promoting intercultural dialogue in Europe

OUTLINE

Before sharing our ideas in detail and analyzing in greater depth European Festivals Association's proposed series of projects to be developed in the run up towards the Year 2008, we herewith would like to line out the essence of our entry for the European Commission's Call for Ideas, introducing why festivals are particularly adept at turning multicultural societies into intercultural societies.

Festivals investigate cultural phenomena linked with immigration, diasporic communities and intercultural societies. Festivals explore intercultural facets of society by centering on specific countries/cultures/communities/issues. Festivals enhance social inclusion through a range of outreach and fringe activities.

In our entry, we show various ways in which to identify, evaluate, develop and exchange projects, experience and good practice in intercultural dialogue:

- The European Festival Charter will highlight different ways in which festivals perform intercultural dialogue and develop and increase intercultural competence. Festivals will sign the Charter in a festive ceremony in 2007 demonstrating their commitment to intercultural dialogue. The Charter will serve as the basis for a series of projects implemented in the frame of "Intercultural Dialogue" by festivals which are committed to intercultural dialogue.
- A series of Pilot Projects will involve festivals in a discussion on the elaboration and implementation of concrete steps and projects initiated by festivals in collaboration with different local partners. The aim is to produce specific results demonstrating that festivals enhance intercultural competences in the local communities.

We also propose different information and communication initiatives in the promotion and branding of intercultural dialogue to increase visibility of the year at a local (in the framework of festival activities) and an international (EFA) level, in partnership with the European Commission.

- The European Festival Charter will be an important tool to brand the Year 2008 and will give it a great visibility. A "Newsletter series" and a webpage dedicated to Intercultural Dialogue will be developed to profile one of the signing festivals of the Charter.
- The series of Pilot Projects will be developed and organised under the label of the Year 2008.



- EFA will inform members, provide them with communication tools offered by the EU as well as tools and texts agreed on with EU vis-à-vis the media, the public, the citizens, stimulate and involve them in different ways. EFA will put the issue of “intercultural dialogue” in the focus of various members meetings and working groups.
- At the local level festivals will brand the year in the context of their annual programme.

Please find here below the detailed description of our entry.

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CALL FOR IDEAS

Festivals as promoters of intercultural dialogue – Why?

Festivals play an important role in turning multicultural societies into intercultural societies. The number of festivals is growing each year, while the quest for intercultural dialogue in Europe has become more and more urgent due to past and current migration, enlargements of the union, increased mobility afforded by the single market, etc. Festivals reach a broad audience, and they are successful at engaging young people. Moreover, festivals are connected to and interconnected with the local environment. Thus, they have the unique opportunity to be in contact and interact with local people in their daily life.

Festivals, by their very nature, are intercultural: they aim at generating a sense of “Europeanness” by addressing international as well as European topics. Festivals not just offer a stage for music, dance or theatre productions, they also investigate cultural phenomena linked with immigration, diasporic communities and intercultural societies. You may think of world music festivals, festivals with a programming centred on specific countries/cultures/communities/issues concerning intercultural facets of society or festivals which explicitly present examples of intercultural creative engagements in their programme. Moreover, festivals enhance social inclusion through a range of outreach and fringe activities (educational schemes, programmes with social groups/cultural groups), through artists in residency programmes, through consciousness and knowledge building activities, through making links between festival programming with the theoretical framework. Thus, festivals are also successful at reaching cultural and ethnic minorities.

Festivals have been successful at acknowledging cultural diversity, while, at the same time, respecting common cultural heritage. Some festivals are more outspoken in regard with their role as a promoter of intercultural dialogue than others. For instance, Al Bustan Festival (Lebanon) gives a clear statement about the way in which it takes “special care in presenting each year a rich and homogenous programme” which focuses on “celebrating a culture of a country or a city” to its international audiences. Furthermore, nourishing the “cultural life of the country reemerging after seventeen years of war” was one wish the founders of the festival had from the very beginning. The festival as a meeting place for national and international artists have made the nourishment of this culture possible. Thus, this particular festival illustrates how intercultural dialogue is needed to enrich the cultural life, particularly in specific historical times.



The following festivals and their specific projects are further examples of festivals as promoters of intercultural dialogue: International Music Festival of 13 Towns Concentus Moraviae ("Migration-Emigration: visitors from abroad in European music history from the Middle Ages to the Early Romantic Era" in 2005 and "Czech Dreams" in 2004), Reykjavik Arts Festival ("Sense in Place" in 2006), BBC Proms ("Out + About" projects), The Bergen International Festival (Nordic Impulses with a particular focus on Baltic and Nordic identities), Cheltenham Festivals (educational projects of Cheltenham's literature and music festivals), Estoril Festival (master classes and summer schools), Festival Ljubljana ("Slovenian musical days", "Young Virtuosi"), International Festival Sarajevo "Sarajevo Winter" (the festival's contribution to the development of Sarajevo as the cultural capital of Europe). These individual projects illuminate various ways in which festivals do work within the framework of intercultural dialogue and have been able to involve the Europeans in intercultural dialogue on a local level. These projects depict that festivals have enormous impact at local, social and educational level when implementing the premises of intercultural dialogue. The description of these and more projects will be submitted to the European Commission along with this call for ideas entry.

Not only programming but also locations of the festivals play an important role in implementing the premises of intercultural dialogue. Various festivals in France, such as Festival d'Avignon and Festival d'Aix, or in Greece, such as Athens & Epidaurus Festivals, or in Republic of Macedonia such as Ohrid Summer Festival use historic sites as locations of the festival. The use of Roman theatre as a testimony to the Roman era or Odeon of Herodes Atticus and other venues in Greece promote and make the specific part of the national history known to an international audience. While the international festival audiences learn about the specific national history, the national identity of the local audiences is reconfirmed. Festivals as promoters of intercultural dialogue have important role in enhancing the recognition of cultural diversity; the locations of the festivals have an impact on the ways in which the festival audiences as well as performers - national and international ones - come into dialogue with each other.

Whereas the above-mentioned festivals shift the audiences' attention to a particular part of national history with the choice of historical buildings as arenas for festival events, Helsinki Festival (Finland) focuses on the present of this Nordic part of Europe. The historical buildings as locations of festivals in the Southern part of Europe find a striking counterpart in the use of tent at Helsinki Festival. Rather than introducing the international audiences to the country's national history, this year's Helsinki Festival shifted the audiences' attention to the present by giving part of the income to the protection of the Baltic Sea. Thus, the festival as a promoter of intercultural dialogue forced one to acknowledge the ways in which festival can bring together people from various countries and make them aware of the importance of intercultural dialogue which, in this case, took the form of an environmental action in this specific geographical area.



A. How can one contribute towards identifying, evaluating, developing and exchanging projects, experience and good practice in intercultural dialogue on a European scale?

European Festivals Association proposes a series of projects to be developed in the run up towards the Year 2008, leading to a culmination of results in the year itself.

I. European Festival Charter

European Festivals Association will present a Festival Charter entitled "Festivals – Promoters of Intercultural dialogue". This Festival Charter will highlight different ways in which festivals perform intercultural dialogue and develop and increase intercultural competence.

The European Festival Charter commits festivals to intercultural dialogue and engages them to respond to the mission, objectives and purposes as laid down in the Charter also beyond 2008. The Charter functions as a contract to guarantee the involvement of festivals in projects envisioned, prepared and implemented in this joint intercultural venture.

The European Festival Charter will be presented on the occasion of the EFA General Assembly in Brussels in the premises of the European Union (proposal) in June 2007: In a festive signing ceremony, festivals will sign the Charter.

Signing festivals are festivals committed to and engaged in intercultural dialogue. These are EFA members as well as non-members and will include as many festivals as possible. All these festivals are emblematic examples of "intercultural glory" performing intercultural dialogue and developing and increasing intercultural competence by means of their programming, special educational schemes with schools or community centres, their investigation into cultural phenomena linked with immigration, diasporic communities, cultural minorities, and intercultural societies.

This Charter is open for more festivals to sign. By signing the Charter festivals commit themselves to intercultural dialogue and the mission as defined in the Charter beyond 2008.

The Charter will gain great visibility on the EFA website and the websites of contracting festivals and it will be distributed to the festival sector, to various EFA partners, to European decision makers, to the European press and to local people in the framework of the festival season itself. A communication strategy for the wider public will be set up (see here below).

In addition to the Festival Charter "Festivals – Promoters of Intercultural dialogue" EFA will edit a publication on "Festivals – Promoters of Intercultural Dialogue" highlighting in-depth the projects, experience and good practice in intercultural dialogue as festivals are experiencing them, documenting the conclusions traced from the year 2008.

II. EFA Pilot Projects of intercultural dialogue

EFA will develop a series of Pilot Projects of artistic co-operation of festivals within the framework of intercultural dialogue. The outline of six of these pilot projects may be read here below:

1. "One Theme, Several Performances"

This Pilot Project will take the form of a series of performances (theatre, dance) dedicated to one country; the performances acted out by people with different nationalities will give a different embodiment to a chosen theme. These performances will illustrate the differences and similarities among different nationalities in the treatment of the chosen theme.



2. "Voices and Images"

"Voices and Images" will invite young people in the chosen countries to compose a song and write lyrics (hip, pop, rock) for the chosen theme. The best practice examples will then be chosen and the participants invited to a workshop (hosted by a festival) taking place in a specific geographical region. In that specific location, the participants will do a music video based on their written music. This workshop will introduce the participants from different countries to this particular geographical region and its culture. The participants will reflect the culture and their view of it in their music videos.

3. "Virtual Spaces"

"Virtual Spaces" will deal with the creation of website for young people in Europe. The website will focus on presenting cultural matters that interest young people; for instance, it will portray school uniforms in different countries, it will enable the user to listen to one sentence in various languages, it will list the top ten songs in each country, etc. The website that focuses on cultural matters will also enable young people to exchange ideas about artistic matters; for instance, it will invite people to write a story about chosen themes.

4. "Distant Stories"

"Distant Stories" will invite young people to write a story dealing with the specific year (when they were younger). The participants from different countries will reflect the socio-cultural context of their home country at that specific time in the story. The best stories will be performed at festival hosting this project and later put online; the stories will also be read in different languages so that one will become familiar with the specificities of each language.

5. "Voices of Intercultural Dialogue"

This project will be a collaboration between leaders of children choirs and multicultural school classes. The choir leaders go to schools (regarded as a multi-cultural school par excellence) to teach children and prepare them for a concert. The rehearsals will lead to a concert where the multicultural school class choir performs together with local children's choir in the framework of the festival. The aim of this project will be to create a dialogue between children from different ethnic groups through vocal music. The program of the concert will be based on the ethnic backgrounds of the children.

6. "Artist in residence project"

This pilot project will look for a prominent artist from an ethnic group of a city / specific geographical region to become "programming artist in residence" at a festival. The task of this co-artistic director will be to look into his/her culture and use this specific knowledge in the assistance with the festival programming of a certain year. With the expertise of this artist and his/her specific cultural background the festival will be able to have deep insights into the culture of the ethnic group and portray a variety of artistic works of people sharing this cultural and ethnic background.

These pilot projects are incentives for further thinking and elaborations and serve as a source of inspiration to open up the debate among the festivals committed to intercultural dialogue (in essence the core group of festivals who signed the Festival Charter). These festivals will be involved in the discussion on these and other projects in order to decide on and coordinate practical steps. The goal of these proposed ideas is to conduct concrete projects in different European cities and to produce specific results demonstrating that festivals enhance intercultural competences in the local communities. EFA will recruit more cooperation partners for the projects throughout Europe.



B. What information and communication initiatives could contribute towards involving all European Union residents, and particularly young people, in the promotion of intercultural dialogue in day to day life (e.g. schools and other places of education, sporting and cultural activities, the workplace, etc.) and familiarising them with it?

EFA, as an umbrella organisation of festivals, has a great opportunity to reach local people and increase visibility of the thematic year 2008. Since festivals have high media exposure, they reach a broad audience via media. Moreover, they have a great opportunity to involve European citizens in different ways (see the introduction to this Call for Ideas entry). EFA will give priority to take part in the European Commission information and communication campaigns. Thus, EFA has contemplated ways in which to increase visibility of the year at a local (in the framework of festival activities) and an international (EFA) level, in partnership with the European Commission.

I. European Festival Charter

The European Festival Charter will be an important tool to brand the Year 2008 and will give it a great visibility (in the run up to the year and the year itself). The Charter will be published on the EFA website and the websites of contracting festivals and it will be distributed to the festival sector, to various EFA partners, to European decision makers, to the European press and to the local people in the framework of the festival season itself.

In addition, a "Newsletter series" and a webpage dedicated to Intercultural Dialogue will be developed to profile one of the signing festivals of the Charter ('Festival in Focus'). The individual stories of each of the contracting festival will be told in an interview with the responsible festival director accessible on the web.

II. EFA Pilot Projects

The series of pilot projects will be developed and organised under the brand of the Year 2008. The pilot projects are particularly addressed to young people and ethnic/cultural minorities at the local level who will be familiarized with the theme.

III. EFA and the Festivals

EFA will inform members, provide them with material and stimulate and involve them in different ways at different occasions: EFA will provide members with communication tools offered by the EU (logo, text, brochures, and other information/communication material) as well as tools and texts agreed on with EU vis-à-vis the media, the public, the citizens. EFA will put the issue of "intercultural dialogue" in the focus of various members meetings and working groups. Discussion topics will be developed within the framework of the EFA European Atelier to be held for the second time in 2008, all this in close co-operation with the European Union and in conformity with the aims and tools defined by the EC Services.

IV. Festivals

At the local level festivals will brand the year in the context of their annual programme (via festival brochure, programme, publications, initiatives/seminars, concerts + contextualization...).



CONCLUSION

We have discussed various ways in which EFA and festivals will promote the year of Intercultural Dialogue. We consider festivals important promoters of intercultural dialogue since festivals reach broad audience, and they are successful at engaging young people. Since festivals are connected to local environment, they also have a great opportunity to be in contact with local people in their daily life. Furthermore, we consider festivals important promoters of intercultural dialogue because they explore social and cultural phenomena present in a city's daily life in many different ways. Festivals address cultural diversity; yet, they also acknowledge the common cultural heritage. Thus, festivals take part in (re)constructing local, regional and national identities.

In this document we focused on exploring how EFA will contribute towards identifying, evaluating, developing and exchanging projects, experience and good practice in intercultural dialogue on a European scale. We discussed how EFA will work out, present, and label the European Festival Charter, edit a publication on "Festivals – Promoters of Intercultural Dialogue" and develop a series of EFA pilot projects of artistic co-operation of festivals. These initiatives depict various ways in which festivals are able to participate in the year of Intercultural Dialogue. They sketch but a few of the initiatives and ideas which will encourage festivals to discuss and implement more projects.

We also discussed what information initiatives will contribute towards involving European citizens in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. We illuminated ways in which EFA will create visibility of the year at a local and an international level by branding it through the EFA Charter, in the framework of the Pilot Projects and by focusing on the thematic year in individual meetings as well as by informing and involving the members about the year. We also pointed out that festival activities are further opportunities to inform festival audiences about the year. Together these initiatives will make festivals strong participants in this thematic year; moreover, this thematic year will gain great visibility through festivals.

We hope that our Entry together with the "Best Practice Examples" will give the Commission an idea how festivals are engaged in intercultural dialogue as on how EFA and the festival sector will be involved in the preparation and implementation of the year 2008 and beyond. Our proposal aims at providing the Commission with a good basis for further preparation of the year. We are of course at your disposal for any questions which might raise and are looking forward to a fruitful collaboration.