
ARTS FESTIVALS'



Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue

AN INITIATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN FESTIVALS ASSOCIATION



European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

**European Festivals Association's
Presentation of the Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue:
Objectives, Achievements, Outlook**

Monday, 17 November 2008, 17:45

Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, in the framework of the conference
"New Perspectives of Intercultural Dialogue in Europe"

REPORT

The overall message of the conference entitled „[New perspectives of intercultural dialogue in Europe](#)“ was made clear from the very beginning, when Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said in his opening speech:

“The end of this Year's campaign is by no means the end of our commitment to intercultural dialogue. Ever since the idea of a dedicated European Year was born, it has been clear that this is a long-term priority for the European Union. We must mainstream dialogue across our policies and programmes. We must make intercultural dialogue a living artery infusing all our initiatives for an inclusive, prosperous, open Europe I can assure you that the European Commission's commitment to promoting intercultural dialogue will remain. The 2009 year of innovation and creativity will give us plenty of opportunities to build on this year's successes.”

The official closing event for the [European Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#) aimed to look to the future of Europe from the point of view of cultural diversity.

Keynote speakers also included Jean Pierre Jouyet, French Secretary of State for European Affairs, Christine Albanel, French Minister of Culture and Communication and Odile Quintin, General Director of DG Education and Culture of the European Commission.

The [European Festivals Association](#) (EFA) had the great opportunity to use this conference - that took place from 17-19 November 2008 in the Centre Pompidou in Paris and was organised by the French EU Presidency and the European Commission - to demonstrate its commitment to this very same goal expressed by Mr Figel'.

“There can be no dialogue without words, but there will be no meaningful intercultural dialogue if we do not move from words to action,” said Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, during the annual high-level meeting between the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and partner organisations in Strasbourg on 7 July 2008. In this spirit, on 7 January 2008 in Ljubljana, EFA launched a [Declaration](#), a text committed to the enhancement of intercultural dialogue; in the course of the year, this Declaration was brought to life by [activities](#) from festivals from all over Europe and beyond.



The ceremony: EFA, festivals and Mr Figel' confirm future commitment

About 600 conference participants from all over Europe and beyond were able to share with EFA the achievements of the Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue - the main project of 2008 aiming at the fostering of intercultural dialogue with the strength of festivals. On Monday evening, EFA concluded the conference with a [presentation](#) of the Declaration giving an overview of the milestones of the projects.

EFA stressed its gratefulness for the support of European Commissioner Ján Figel' who, in return, awarded the Association and 20 major European festivals for their efforts throughout the year.



"I think the nature of the piece of art underscores perfectly the partnership and the long-term commitment to intercultural dialogue of all of us," said Ján Figel' during the ceremony. "It is a great pleasure for me to share this award, in the knowledge that it will travel to all parts of Europe, just as we wish the spirit of intercultural dialogue to spread its warmth to every corner of our common home."

Looking ahead, EFA added an [Epilogue](#) to the Declaration and thus once again underlined the strength of arts and culture and in particular festivals to enhance dialogue between cultures.



Festivals from Avignon, Berlin, Brno, Edinburgh, Emilia Romagna, l'Epau, Estoril, France Festivals, Granada, Ljubljana, Reykjavik, Rheingau, Santander, Sarajevo, Festivals in Transition, Trondheim, Varna, Vilnius and Flanders confirmed their engagement for "peaceful and free exchange among people and the respect for cultural diversity also beyond 2008" (abstract from the Epilogue to the Declaration).

Also Ján Figel' shared his future vision with the festivals present: "Our partnership has gone from strength to strength; and the new Cultural Agenda for Europe, and the European Year for Innovation and Creativity, will multiply our opportunities for working together."

EFA's exhibition stand visualising the projects' success

The conference was accompanied by an exhibition which presented the results of the major projects of the European Year - one of them the Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue. EFA visualised the immense support of festivals from all over Europe and beyond who gave their signature to support the Declaration's objective to engage into intercultural dialogue.





Intercultural Dialogue in 2009: EFA's future activities

Against this background and in view of the 2009 theme which is innovation and creativity, EFA will make major efforts to embed the objectives of the Declaration in its 2009 projects and to continue to foster intercultural dialogue. To name only a few of the 2009 projects that will - next to their very specific objectives - also create the means for exchange between different cultures from Europe and beyond: the second [European Atelier for Young Festival Managers](#) taking place from 26 April - 3 May in Varna, Bulgaria and the **ARS NOVA** meeting taking place in March in Brussels. Furthermore, EFA will extend its [BOOKS series](#) by EFA BOOKS 4 which will focus on festivals and their important contribution to intercultural dialogue. Much more is planned - please refer to the EFA website at www.efa-aef.eu for latest news!

Conference highlights

The Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue is one of hundreds of activities and projects that were [highlighted](#), promoted and shared with the wide public in the course of year. All aimed to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of intercultural dialogue.

The conference provided an overview of these projects and an opportunity to learn from them. It was also an opportunity to discuss how to put into practice the lessons learned during the Year through both policy and projects in order to promote intercultural dialogue in the long term.

A wide range of issues was covered in round table discussions: the role of the media; the strategic orientations of public action; the aims and the teaching methods of education for intercultural dialogue; the promotion of intercultural dialogue in relations between Europe and non-EU member states. The conference saw not only politicians discussing; artists, cultural operators and organisations discussed together with conference participants the achievements of the year as well as the perspectives for the years to come.

Like one of the spotlights of the EFA [FestFlash on Intercultural Dialogue](#) - FestFlash No 2 focussing on [Avignon and the role of artists for the fostering of intercultural dialogue](#) - the last day of the conference focused on the same issue. EFA would like to share a few aspects of this round table on "The role of intercultural dialogue in art and culture and vice-versa" which brought together academics, cultural operators who organised projects in 2008 dedicated to intercultural dialogue, as well as artists.

They shared with the audience the difficulties and the achievements of their 2008 projects. For example Danièle Fouache, conceptor and coordinator of the European project "Ten months of school and opera" from Opéra de Paris, referred to the problem of language and distance but stressed the exceptional work all involved partners did. One very important aspect of their work was the "work on themselves"; she stressed that listening to the others and to the differences was not enough, but that one also has to reflect about oneself and to express one's differences.



All representatives agreed that in many cases the success of a project was a financial question. Stella Chryssoulaki, Head of the Educational Programmes and Media Section of the Museums, Exhibitions and Media Department of the Greek Ministry of Culture, said that economy will dictate the nature of projects on intercultural dialogue. Therefore, she said, it is key to stress the important role of culture: “culture is politics”. Also Vesna Copic, Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Social Science University of Ljubljana, said that the EU needs a European public sphere which is transnational and interactive if it wants to be more than an economic Union. But to reach this, more money and structural funds were needed.

A closing debate on “Europe in the world: The role of intercultural dialogue in its relations with third-party countries” was also of interest for EFA as EFA membership goes beyond Europe and as many of EFA’s European members undertake partnerships with non-European actors. Beral Madra, Director of the BM Contemporary Art Centre of Istanbul, for example stressed that artist-in-residencies are most effective tools of intercultural dialogue. She also underlined the importance of festivals in this process as a tool to foster a dialogue between cultures. She named the main obstacles for such initiatives: differences between infrastructure, educational systems, administration policies and markets. Olexandr Butsenko, Director of the Ukraine Development Centre “Democracy through Culture”, brought up another interesting aspect, saying that it was necessary to work at local level and to develop long-term programmes with short-term and inter-sectoral projects. Ahmed El Attar, Theatre Director, translator and choreographer from Egypt, came back to artists’ role in intercultural dialogue and underlined that artists, when working together, transcend all kinds of borders. Therefore it is very important, he said, to bring artists together, for example in festivals. He stressed that programming itself was an art and that programmers should “see” more. In this context, more mobility initiatives should be supported as well as artistic institutional development for example to work more with children.

Closing the conference, Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament, stressed once again that “dialogue between cultures must become a feature of Europe, not just in 2008, but as part of an overall project of relations between peoples.”

Download related documents:

- the [Arts Festivals’ Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue](#)
- the [Epilogue](#)
- the [press release](#) covering the ceremony on 17 November 2008 in Paris
- [photos](#)