



Good morning everybody,

I am honoured to have the floor and share the work, the foundation and the mission of the European Festivals Association with you, an example of a 65 years young festivals community across Europe.

Let me start with a quote of Denis de Rougemont, founder of the European Festivals Association and one of the great European thinkers of his time who said:

"Culture is all the dreams and labour tending towards forging humanity.

Culture requests a paradoxical pact: diversity must be the principle of unity, taking stock of differences is necessary not to divide, but to enrich culture even more.

Europe is a culture or it is not."

There are some guiding principles in EFA's work that are timeless:

- to get the world together peacefully
- to stand together
- and not fight with each other.
- And to allow all kinds of views and opinions to be shared, discussed, reviewed

When EFA was born in 52; it was a time after the second world war that saw some of the most outstanding festivals in Europe born: Edinburgh International Festival Festival d'Avignon the Holland Festival Vienna Festwochen, Festival d' Aix en Provence, Bergen Festival, the Dublin Theatre Festival to name but a few.

What these efforts have in common, different as though they might be, is the need to come back to human trust, connections and a sense of cooperation.

As festivals, we work to foster solidarity. Europe is a continent; a continent of immense diversity, a cultural diversity that makes it rich and inspiring. Europe is a collection of countries. Above all, Europe is a peace project. In first and last instance, Europe is about organizing a group of people living together; by preference engaged people that in the European project we call citizens.

Denis de Rougemont, philosopher, wanted to build Europe based on a community that shares, exchanges and cooperates. Igor Markevic, eminent conductor and EFA cofounder, wanted to strengthen cooperation and artistic diversity.

Until today, EFA fosters these aims by creating opportunities for festivals to meet, get to know each other, their visions and artistic goals and realize where they can work together across geographies, generations and artistic forms. We count today 100 members in 40 countries including colleagues in Russia. But the 'efforts' go beyond the membership, beyond the 'existence'; more so the 'doing' became central.

With the Ateliers for Young Festival Managers, the Atelier for Production Managers, the future Atelier for financial managers, ..., we train young festival managers with a group of well-selected young festival makers can discuss in depth their projects and ideas, their concerns and their constraints with their peers who are - like themselves - at the same beginning point in a career and - complementarily - discuss them with mentors like Sir Jonathan Mills, Rose Fenton, Robyn Archer, Mark Russel

Another example is the EU Label for Festivals: EFFE, Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe, supported by the European Commission to recognize the quality and work of festivals in Europe and allowing tourists worldwide to search for their festival in a comprehensive tourist guide.

We are on Monday launching the second edition.

These programmes that EFA developed cater to the need to share knowledge but also to build human cross-generational, cross-disciplines and cross-border communities. When professionals have connections in different countries that they can

- rely on for information and help with practical issues
- that they can brainstorm with

When they know each other and understand each other's artistic goals and understand how practices and legislation function across countries they are better equipped to find solutions faster and cooperate more often.

**That is EFA's cores mission. And our Russian colleague festivals are invited to be part of it. Sochi Festival is our most important member in Russia hosting the second Readings in Sochi next year, and the Stars of the White nights are our member as well. Join us if you believe in cooperation across borders. Take part in the training programme. Create a programme 'Russia for Festivals, Festivals for Russia'. And lets start co-producing more.**

Of course, EFA changes in its times.

Economic crisis, growing nationalism, fear of the other (yes, surprisingly still in our day and age) are all present in our societies. The question is: Where are we, the cultural sector, in this world with citizens that feel excluded from decision making, or from the prosperity of our continent, that feel lost, frustrated?

- What are festival makers' proposals to make them real and alive, shining in a world of contrary realities?
- Where do artists, and we as festival makers, put our focus?

These questions have a lot to do with the concept of Citizenship.

Citizenship is not a simple issue. It requires a sense of responsibility, social engagement and political insight.

The level how European citizenship can be brought to life has all to do with how the ones politically responsible give shape to the European peace project: **how do citizens relate to each other? Who is a citizen?**

**Who can become a citizen?**

**A lot can be learnt by looking at festivals' artistic choices and at their growing outreach programmes. That is again, what we as EFA do: we are not telling in a moralistic way what should be and is right, but we want to be and offer a platform for ideas and concerns to be discussed.**

What we see in festivals is that this change urges festivals to make choices and look carefully at the scope of their activities in terms of audience participation: "not asking whether the subsidized cultural organisations sufficiently reflect the current society, but rather, whether each member of this current society can sufficiently develop their cultural needs within these organisations. Instead of desperately searching for a way in which the audience of each cultural organisations can reflect the diversity of the local population, it seems to me to be more interesting to determine whether each human being can develop themselves in their own city or towns." Mehdi Marechal, demos

As the best kind of change comes **from leading by example** here are, **but a few**, examples of festivals' that **are acting** (rather than reacting!) **to be connected** to their **times and to their audiences**

### **BBC Proms**

For years worked on a consistent way to help everybody regardless of their knowledge of classical music to find their cup of tea in the festival

Proms in the Park & proms extra – outside walls

Classical for starters

Proms for families workshops  
Proms by composer, conductor, performer  
Interval talks

### **Abu Dhabi Festival**

Have had for years a really strong education & community programme  
Presenting artworks of children with autism  
Having exclusive initiatives for schools, nurseries, orphanages  
annual **Festival In Focus**, which invited school groups to **go behind the scenes**

Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre

With **Brave Kids** where

Young artists from different backgrounds

work together present it to the public  
the goal is to use art to make positive changes in their communities  
to keep their personal dignity  
help them nourish the values and the culture they believe in.

### **ARS Electronica**

Work with different communities in Linz

Young:

- **Work with new generations** (not just FOR the new generations):
- Present concepts & experiments people under 19 - **u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD**
- Have artists, designers, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and social activists from all over the world discussing ideas and projects – this year **Future Innovators Summit** - the future of humankind, the future of education, and the future of the Commons.

Always invite a university to present work – this year **Tsinghua University**.

### **Linz communities**

- SHADES TOURS - Guided by the homeless
- Community Parcours in Farsi + Arabic + Russian + Romanian + Igbo + Servo- Croatian + Turkish
- For the second year host the Conference of People Providing Aid to Refugees in the Province of Upper Austria
- bringing groups refugees to visit ARS Electronica

- training them for the We guide you tours
- but also have them working with the artists every week once a week

We believe that EFA should tell these stories of festivals, support them, share them, and help improve the conditions they work in. **Festivals change with their times** because they “read” their contexts and adapt to how they sense their audiences need to be challenged and cherished and, above all, because they are very aware of the **importance of working with the artists** and giving them opportunities to - not only present - but also to create new work and **artists will always sense the change that is yet to come.**

Kathrin Deventer

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