

European Festivals Association (EFA)

Launch of “EFA FestLab for Creativity and Innovation”

An initiative of the European Festivals Association
At the occasion of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation

27 March 2009, 9:15-9:30
Prague, Municipal Library,
in the framework of the Czech EU Presidency event and ministerial conference
“Forum for Creative Europe”

REPORT

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Festivals to leave "footprints" through the FestLab

On 27 March 2009 in Prague, the European Festivals Association (EFA) launched its [FestLab for Creativity and Innovation](#). In the framework of the Czech EU Presidency event „[Forum for Creative Europe](#)“, European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel’, assigned 25 major European festivals from 15 different European countries with the [FestLabPass](#).



Referring to the enormous success of the Arts Festivals’ Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue, the EFA flagship project in 2008, EFA President Darko Brlek stressed the continued commitment of the Association: “Following 2008, the European Festivals Association continues to support the exchange between cultures, between people and between the artist and the audience” and “will invite festivals throughout the year to engage their artistic and social power and act as strong messengers of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.”

Launched at the occasion of the [European Year of Creativity and Innovation](#), the FestLab for Creativity and Innovation has been established “to spotlight the **excellence of festivals in the creative and societal process** and to give incentives to successfully fulfil the festivals’ core mission which still is the artistic one,” underlined EFA Secretary General Kathrin Deventer.



The following festivals were among the first who received the **FestLabPass** from Commissioner Figel’: International Gaudeamus Music Week Amsterdam, Bergen International Festival, Brno International Music Festival, Concentus Moraviae Festival, Czech Association of Music Festivals, Emilia Romagna Festival, Festival de l’Epau, Estoril Music Weeks, European Conference of Promoters of New Music, Flanders Festival, Festival Internacional de Música y Danza de Granada, Brucknerfest Linz, Ljubljana Festival, Festival Mitte Europa, Prague Spring International Music Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, Santander International Festival,

International Festival Sarajevo “Sarajevo Winter”, Vilnius Festival and International Festival Wroclaw Cantans (Wroclaw).

In his speech, Mr Figel’ emphasised: “It is important that we leave footprints in our lives, that we have some inspiration, some legacy, some orientation. (...) I am happy that festivals are with us. **They are ambassadors, multipliers of all these great important messages and values.** I wish them that they leave not only many footprints but inspirational roads to people.”

Festivals will continue their important work and **act as laboratories of creativity and promoters of innovation.** The most innovative and creative projects will feature on the FestLab website; follow the FestLab mission at www.efa-aef.eu/festlab and on the [FestLabBlog](#) on the LabforCulture website at www.labforculture.org.



Arts Festivals - Laboratories of creativity, Promoters of Innovation

(Extract from Kathrin Deventer's speech)



“[...] A festival is pure opportunity - and bears responsibility: towards the artists, and the audiences!

Festivals have an intrinsic task to make artistically strong choices - to be contemporary, to excite, and to surprise. The audience knows: you have to be with festivals to know new trends, to be confronted with the arts, the real essence of why we do festivals! To look into new forms of aesthetics, see new forms of partnership models.

When civil society, networks, and festivals as platforms are alert enough

to serve the artists in a constructive way, the artists will provide excellent work for all of us - eventually leading our creative and innovative process in society.

Politics have to follow this path drawn by the artists. It is not far-fetched! Most of the time they follow a little too slowly, but still: For the first time, EU and national cultural ministries agreed to walk the same paths and to find out how the local, regional, national and European authorities can work in a direct relationship in the recently established EU platforms and the OMC: a first step not to lose the footing of the artists and their subjects! **Cultural values** have to move up in the hierarchy, from the appendix to the introduction, as we agreed with Václav Havel yesterday. We have to look for complementary responsibilities and agreements that hopefully, one day, will be seamlessly fading into one another.”

Why this conference?

“The aim of this ministerial conference has been inspired by the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and also by the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain. Its aim is to contribute to a different quality of perceiving creativity (and culture). These entities are not something “extra” when the work is done, they are not only for relaxation and for filling one’s free time, but they form a **fundamental basis** of the meaning of our lives. Creativity is what differentiates the mechanism of passive consumerism from the pleasure from being active and acting, whereas culture helps us find a way in society and confronts us with traditions values.” (Václav Jehlicka, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic)

The conference aimed at recognising the unique contribution of art and culture to the development and utilisation of Europe’s creative potential and at reinforcing the perception of **art and culture as the primary source of inspiration for European creativity**. It drew on the notion that art and culture are, just like science and research, the starting point for the search for, and formation of, efficient strategies leading to social and economic prosperity and in effect to a full-fledged life.

The objective was to highlight the **unique potential of creativity in forming an open civil society** and strengthening Europe’s global competitiveness. The conference introduced the notion of creativity and its role in the changes of contemporary society and modes of its application in education and economy.



Conference highlights

(Source: EU website for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation: http://create2009.europa.eu/press/news_archive/news_singleview/news/stretch-the-borders-of-the-creative-class.html)

“**Mr Florida** was one of an impressive line-up of researchers, policy makers, practitioners, economists and other thinkers who came together to debate the contribution of creativity to the economy, to education and to society more broadly.

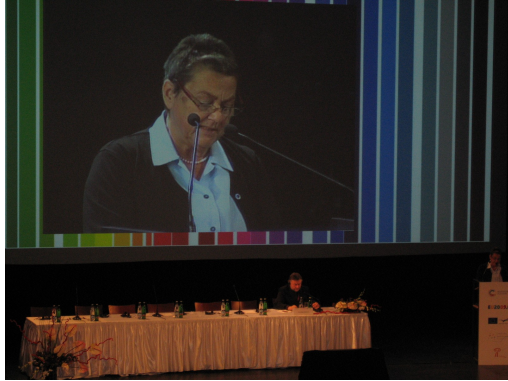
Best known for his concept of the “3 Ts” (technology, talent and tolerance) essential to the emergence of a “creative class” of citizens which has caught the attention of leaders worldwide, Mr Florida called on each of us to “press the re-set button. We need to move beyond conspicuous consumption and accept the fundamental driver of our time ... We need to harness the creativity which is innate to every human being ... Every single human being is creative; the challenge of our time is to stretch the borders of the creative class”.

Opening the conference, **Václav Havel**, former President of the Czech Republic, spoke of his personal experiences and reflections on the many roles of culture, recalling that it is first and foremost an integral part of the human spirit. Culture gives expression to humanity and should be prized as such. In their opening words, the Ministers of Culture of the Czech Republic, France and Sweden all referred to the need to firmly recognise the powerful potential of culture and creativity at the heart of European societies in this period of economic, financial and possibly social crisis.

Commissioner **Ján Figel** recalled that just 20 years ago, the Iron Curtain still divided Europe and spoke of his hope for a “more human 21st century” in which the talent and creativity of each human being would be free to flourish. The conference also saw the official launch of a headline initiative of the 2009 Year - the **FestLab of the European Festivals Association**, in which member Festivals commit to act as laboratories of creativity: <http://www.efa-aef.eu/>

During **three dedicated sessions**, conference participants and expert panels debated the role of creativity in the economy (how to achieve culturally sustainable development? what kind of national policies encourage the potential of the cultural and creative industries, especially their huge majority of SMEs?); culture and wider society (is there a recipe for a creative city? what is the “diversity advantage”? is artistic freedom guaranteed in this “age of creativity?”); and culture and education (how can schools and artists work together to promote the skills and behaviours which young people need? what about informal learning? and how does all this impact on firms and their skills needs?).

In the concluding session, Ms **Katherine Mathernová**, Deputy Director General of the European Commission’s DG for Regional Policy illustrated the increasingly close links between culture and regional development initiatives, going well beyond investment in infrastructure to support for innovative forms of both macro- and micro-level cooperation. Finally, Mr **Jeremy Rifkin**, President of the Foundation on Economic Trends, spoke passionately of the need for our thinking on culture to rapidly develop to find a response to the major challenges of our time: the global economic crisis, the energy crisis and climate change. Only through creative collaborative thinking will we be capable of finding a way out of these crises.”



Related links and documents

- [News on the FestLab launch on the FestLab website](#)
- [News on the FestLab launch on the EU website](#)
- [FestLabBlog on the LabforCulture website](#): FestLab Page launched
- [Photo Gallery](#) at the EFA website
- Photo Gallery at the Czech EU Presidency website [First](#) and [Second day of Ministerial Conference "Forum for Creative Europe"](#)
- the EFA intervention can be watched at the website of the Forum for Creative Europe at www.forumforcreativeeurope.cz/live
- interviews held in the framework of the conference can be watched at a dedicated youtube channel: www.youtube.com/creativeeurope
- [Speech Mr Ján Figel'](#), European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth
- [Speech Mr Darko Brlek](#), EFA President
- [Speech Mrs Kathrin Deventer](#), EFA Secretary General
- EFA President Darko Brlek introduces the FestLab idea in an [interview](#)
- Press release in [English](#), [French](#) and [German](#)
- [List of first FestLabPass holders](#)