



Arts Festivals Summit 2023 Peralada / Girona

Report – Festivals and sustainability

25 April 2023, 15.15 – 16.30, Girona

With the contributions of: Tamar Brüggemann (Director of CULTURESCAPES), Peter Florence (Initiator of European Festivals Forest) and Silke Lalvani (Head of Public Affairs at Pearle* - Live Performance Europe) and all participants present in the room.

See the **Climate Action Brainstorm document** that summarises the results of the workshop made by Tamar and Peter completing the report here below: www.efa-aef.eu/media/17963-girona2023sustainabilitysessionreporteffefa.pdf

Participants: all the participants from the Arts Festivals Summit 2023 were invited.

Introduction

Europe looked very deeply into the word sustainability because it has many different aspects.

The session was supposed to start with a first part dedicated to the place of cultural activities in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but due to a COVID-19 infection Lucía Vázquez was not able to travel and speak about how to integrate the SDGs in festivals.

The session was remodelled to focus on environmental sustainability to see what festivals can do together on the European level to gather knowledge and best practices on the topic.

Ultimate Cookbook for Cultural Managers: The EU Green Deal and Live Performance Organisations

Pearle* - Live Performance Europe and the European Festivals Association (EFA) have published a new booklet “The EU Green Deal and Live Performance Organisations” that helps performing arts professionals and organisations to understand better the European law on environmental sustainability and the numerous initiatives related to the EU Green Deal.

Silke Lalvani from Pearle* presented the e-book and explained that beforehand this series was printed but that it has changed and that it is now only available online for sustainable reasons.

The EU has the aim to become carbon neutral by 2050 and its strategy is to move forward on this path to become sustainable by 2030. The EU Green Deal involves a huge package of legislative proposals and different actions. A subsequent number of financial subsidies aids are attached to it, helping all sectors in their transformation to be carbon neutral and supporting circular economy.

The cookbook presents selected relevant initiatives that are interesting for the day-to-day work of the live performance profession. E.g. How can you get more into circular thinking when you produce a performance or a festival? How can you save energy when you build a stage? How can you travel more sustainably? How can you draft a greener strategy for your organisation and get funding according to that?

Silke developed the mobility point as an example. The EU mobility strategy aims to cut drastically the greenhouse gas emissions of the transport sector but this doesn't mean that nobody can travel anymore. On the contrary, for the EU, travel is important. So what the EU does is they try to create carbon neutral options. The EU looks into how to build railway networks throughout Europe, how to have more electric cars or other zero emitters on the road, how to make more ecological friendly fuels for the planes, etc. It's about changing the mobility pattern. The live performing sector can contribute to the shift: touring (slower mobility pattern), delivery of goods and services, and audience travel (cooperation with travel operators, recommendations to travel in a more sustainable way). She concluded by inviting participants to download the cookbook on EFA or Pearle's websites.

Greening Festivals: healthier, wealthier, happier playbook

The second part of the session was organised in the format of a collaborative workshop facilitated by Peter Florence and Tamar Brüggemann. Several festival directors and managers from around Europe and beyond shared their experience in reducing carbon footprint and climate actions in short presentations of 3 minutes. They presented what worked and didn't work for them. After a first series of presentations, participants were invited to break out into groups of 10 people during 20 minutes to exchange about their initiatives. A representative of each group was assigned to summarise and report back in 2 minutes the 2 best ideas that came in during the conversations. The content of the workshop will feed into an environmental plan, with best practices coming from all the festivals present in the room, pooling knowledge.

Working on a climate action plan and net zero can feel overwhelming and difficult. Often festivals argue that they don't have the resources and that there are other issues that are more pressing. From the survey made during EFA's Arts Festivals Summit in Galway in November 2021, 90% of the festivals said they cared about the topics. Only 20% of the festivals already thought about how to deal with it and 5% said they were on it and they didn't need any help.

Tamar presented the following slide: reuse, recycle, rethink. The missing part is mitigation, which is harder to find out, but for this there is the project of the European Festivals Forest (presented here below).



Presentation 1: Tamar Brüggemann, Director of Wonderfeel Festival

Wonderfeel is an outdoor classical music festival in the Netherlands, which means that the whole festival site is built from scratch. This has many advantages because you are in charge of what you use, unlike in existing venue.

Wonderfeel tries to be the most sustainable possible. Tamar shared two examples about food: since a couple of years, the festival works with vegetable gardens nearby the festival site. These gardens are maintained by older people with dementia or autism. The vegetables and herbs they grow are used for food catering, so it's local and heartwarming as well. The second example she gave is about meat consumption, which impacts various dimensions: environmental through its huge carbon footprint, eating a lot of meat is associated with negative health effects, and finally animal welfare. In the EU, each person eats about 80 kilogram of meat each year, which is huge. Since 2001, Wonderfeel decided to have a vegetarian catering for its crew and since 2002 the whole festival site is meatless.

Presentation 2: Julia Amour, Director of Festivals Edinburgh

Festivals Edinburgh worked together with its 11 festivals to compare the carbon reduction plans that they have put together and they have been doing that since 2011.

Julia started with a spectacular but ultimately unsuccessful example: a manufacturer of clean hydrogen power from one of Scotland's remote islands got in touch with them to ask if they could trial a hydrogen clean hydrogen generator. This was tested at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2021. That year, the festival was only taking place in very large temporary outdoor pavilions. Several

of the concerts (about 600 to 700 seats each) were powered entirely by this hydrogen generator. The company got a lot of money from the Scottish Government to trial this technology and brought a lot of money to this project. Julia concluded that she doesn't think this project will go anywhere because it's cumbersome. When they tried the system with the Science Festival happening in a site in the middle of the city, the city safety team told them they would need to have 24-hour security around it because of the flammability. It's an interesting action but costing too much money. What she retained is that there are many companies out there who are keen to work with festivals and their audiences. Next time, she hopes to hit the jackpot and get sponsorship for something which can be applied to all their festivals.

Another more modest action concerns the Edinburgh International Children's Festival that has set up a carbon budget for their staff travel and applying it to different departments within the festival. This was done to try to reduce the carbon footprint of the festival in a 3-year carbon target, allowing a bit more fluctuations from year to year in terms of the programming. The festival is thinking to organise a no flight festival for one year to be able to model some of those new behaviours.

Presentation 3: Susana Martins, from Cistermusica

Cistermusica is a classical musical festival in Portugal. The festival promotes touring within the country for artists coming from abroad. On the other hand, they try to take advantage of the international travels and tours of artists who are already programmed in the region.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival, which was maintained in 2020, had the need to move from printed programmes to digital programmes. This action is still maintained since then, even if for older audiences, who struggle with the digital, they continue to print some programmes but in smaller quantities than before.

One of the things Cistermusica would like to do but didn't manage yet is to eliminate the plastic water bottles, especially for big orchestras on stage. Susana explained that it's very hard for them to replace that. They are trying to use reusable bottles to commit to this action in the next years. Cistermusica also replaced plastic catering supplies by porcelain and glass. These are small actions, but the festival is committed to going greener in the upcoming years.

Peter Florence added that the plastic bottles that are at the conference will take 220 years to be degraded if not recycled. They cost €2 each: on this amount €1.10 goes to the hotel, about €0,40 goes between the firm that sold it to the hotel and the producer, €0,35 goes on making the plastic bottle and only €0.15 goes to the water that is inside it.

Presentation 4: Jurriaan Cooman, Director of CULTURESCAPES

CULTURESCAPES is a festival that focuses on other countries but since COVID-19 the festival changed its focus to regions where the environment and climate crisis is being the most visible and horrible.

The first edition in 2021 was dedicated to Amazonia. This year, in 2023, the festival will be on Sahara (North Africa and sub-Saharan). By changing the key topics in the festival's programme, it allowed the indigenous people to speak about the reality of climate change in the places where they live. At the same time, inviting artists from South America or from Africa cost a lot on a carbon level because of the flights. CULTURESCAPES tried to find a deal: the festival only flies them in under the condition that there are at least three concerts or performances organised with them in Europe or in

Switzerland. This year, Jurriaan explained they have been highly successful because some of the groups from Ivory Coast or Mali will perform up to 11 shows. It feels more OK but as the artists still need to fly, it's important to neutralise the costs. To answer this, the festival 2023 will close on a performance related to climate.

Jurriaan shared his idea of organising an edition about oceans in 2027, the Pacific Rim, locations that will be destroyed because of the water rise. He plans to raise attention through arts and culture to Swiss audiences and the rich companies.

Presentation 5: Jovanka Višekruna Janković, Director of ArtLink

ArtLink and other colleagues from Belgrade have been developing the sustainability agenda since 2020. One of the most interesting projects is the board game for children called the *Play for Nature* that was created by ArtLink. The game is printed in 3 languages so it's accessible for the whole Western Balkans region in Serbian, Albanian and Macedonian. The project was implemented with the support of Mitsubishi company and ArtLink organised tournament for children in primary schools, in five cities in the region. ArtLink also developed an exhibition from the illustrations on the topic of protection of the nature made by the visual artists team to created. The board game is also about bodies and walking in the forest to try to find food. Children need to find the right garbage to recycle in order to collect food for themselves. The game is very interesting because it combines a memory game with a quest for knowledge. Children enjoyed the game so ArtLink is going to continue next year with more schools in the region. The game is not only for children, it's also for their parents and the whole family. The festival also plans to approach ministries for physics and for ecology in the three countries of the region to try to have a larger impact.

Summing up of the presentations and European Festivals Forest

The series of examples shared concern: responsible use of food and food production, reducing and the plastics on your festival site, transportation, recycling material that we reuse, energy provision... In the back of the cookbook, there is a long list of EU funds which will support environmental compliance and adventure. They don't all deal with the cultural and creative sectors, but there is a vast amount of money that the EU and national governments are pushing in, driving towards the Sustainability Development Goals for which every EU nation has its own office. They are good at helping people and organisations find funds for implementing actions.

This wealth-generating activity is twofold. It costs less to do the right thing like installing a water pole than buying plastic bottles of water. Secondly, it enables you to go to people. E.g. Companies are selling electric cars, green energy, new technology and are interested by festivals to promote their services to the audiences as they represent a market. Festivals are valuable to companies who are trying to make money, even if sometimes it can be greenwashing corporate social responsibility.

Peter underlined that he used to run a festival in Wales, on a greenfield site where the nearest dual carriageway was one-hour drive away, and very difficult to get to. 15% of the festival's annual turnover of 4 million came from investment in the green sector.

Festival makers are socially responsible leaders within their own societies and creative industries. Coalition really works and festivals must invest more time and energy in climate friendly actions.

The European Festivals Forest is a good example. It has been initiated in Iceland because 60 years ago it became clear to Icelanders that their glaciers were melting. They started looking at the land that was being released and thought: “How are we going to use it most productively?” As a result of that, the €2 that are spent in planting trees in Iceland would have been €6 before. If you are planting in Germany it would be €7, if you are planting in Scotland, €10, if you are trying to plant it somewhere where you have to maybe persuade someone to lend you the land, it's €25. You have to buy the land. Planting trees is a very good deal and it costs almost nothing because it's a cost that people are very happy to contribute. Among the festivals approached so far, between 35 and 47% of their audience say, “Yes, we will voluntarily contribute €2 to help out a tree”. If festivals all work together in some big coalition, we can achieve more together than we can individually. Any tree planted anywhere is good. Tree planted in Iceland with 100 festivals across Europe is a good start.

Peter then invited participants to exchange during a 20-minute talk their issues about production, repurposing, rethinking and mitigating.

Reports about the group conversations

Group 1:

- 50-minute city: the maximum of provisions are within proximity.
- Festival using rickshaws as a green transport.
- Have a green policy and communicate about it to raise awareness with the team, audiences and stakeholders.
- Have a sustainability manager and sustainability team or give this responsibility to someone within your team to carry out the policy, look at the green process, and policies within a broader city context E.g. staff can train on environmental policy: no flights further than 6 hours, take the train if possible.
- There is a company providing festivals with tap water from farmers (Ruby). These infrastructures could be shared throughout the year with other companies.

Group 2:

- Support festivals to work towards sustainability audits.
- Joint action proposals for training responsible people and creating methodologies.
- Debate about clean energy, rechargeable batteries, battery packs, using HBL (which is biofuel instead of diesel for generators).
- Estonia created guidebooks for cultural managers on how to meet the green criteria. Meeting the criteria is essential to get event permits and funding.
- Carbon literacy course: during the course people / organisation are encouraged to look at their own ranking and supply choice. Every little step done on an individual or organisational level is good to take.

Group 3:

- Singing notes make you well, it's related to the energy used for producing them. A festival tried to conscientise the audience about this in one of the creations shown.
- Organise recycling workshop at the end, collecting everything and counting, and then have a conversation with the city council about it.
- Use of old catalogs for building tables in schools.
- Provide a ticket for public transport that is included in the festival ticket.
- Promotion of shared rides.
- Choosing artists working about the environment toping in their narratives

- Collaborating with bicycle associations, especially when a land is flat and that's it easy to cycle to encourage audiences to use bikes to come. These new initiatives can also be ways of receiving new types of fundings.

Group 4:

- Involving your audience in planting a tree at your festival that they can see grow every year when they come back.
- Develop a forest. This also exists in Korea.
- Start working with green certification legal agencies to start involving your staff members and audiences to achieve a more sustainable festival.
- Reduction and repurposing of festivals' merchandising: restructuring the initiatives started at a festival to build a more coherent approach.
- Green Deal became a buzzword in certain contexts and may sometimes have bad reputation. Some organisations think they don't have the capacity to be involved in this but everyone can be.
- Think about how to involve your partners, like hotels for example.

Group 5:

- Reflect on the running period of festivals: moving festivals from the most high energy time of the year? Do festivals need to happen in high summer for colder countries or should they rather happen in the cold months?
- Energy saving wind turbine could be installed by a festival to power its entire structure, and could be shared with other communities around the place.
- Programming more local artists and putting them together with international artists. By reducing the number of international artists, festivals can double the value of the local ones by putting them together in groups with the international artists and commissioning more material locally. This supports local craftsmen.
- Not giving branded plastic like lanyards, name tags, and tickets that will be thrown away but rather things that can be kept as a souvenir, that are valued and that people can bring back at the next festival.
- Think about what's really needed to print, not just in terms of programmes but in terms of whether giving out things that have a brand on them, when they could be much simpler and could be used/reused many times.
- Digital cost also a lot of energy. How can we reduce ourselves digitally, including computers, smartphones, etc.

Group 6:

- Whatever you do, let people know you are doing it so that you can be an example and also make a difference.
- Whatever you are buying ask your suppliers to be greener.
- Solar panels are being installed on the roof of a theater that provide energy to the structure, lights and everything else that consumes energy.
- Platform scientists rather than activists to talk in events to briefly describe in a scientific way the environmental situation and condition.
- Organise longer and slower tours. The Producers Agent Distribution Alliance is helping producers with touring of the artists in performing arts to work collaboratively instead of competition to lead to sustainability touring the artists.
- Be aware that all these topics are depending a lot on the context, time and space of the festival happening. These things can be difficult to apply to all festivals in Iran, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, the UK, Norway, China, India, etc.

Peter concluded the sessions by saying that festivals are places of inspiration, and it's important to communicate about what's happening there. He referred to EFA that has links to the European legislation and connects festivals in Europe and beyond to share knowledge.

Festivals makers must think on how to inspire the governments to make regulations. EFA and its festivals community use their force to show how festivals can work on sustainability to make this space and to not let things happen anymore like paying flight tickets at a very low price.

Most festivals don't have an idea how sustainable they are. Tools exist to measure the carbon footprint and organisations can help in measuring that. July's bicycle has experience with festivals.

There is more knowledge, more experience, more energy in this room than any organisation can experience on its own. Coalition and collaboration are essential to the sector and crucial. Actions taken affect the management of the structures, the artists and audiences, but also the context. It impacts the way artistic communities are lead. Some cities and countries within Europe already ask a climate action plan alongside a non gender discrimination policy, and a health and safety policy. If festivals don't have this, they cannot ask fundings. Festivals must anticipate and start writing their own policy and also feed government policies because festivals have the ability to do it, even on a EU level. Festivals are very powerful politically. There are between 200.000 to 500.000 arts festivals in Europe. They have a combined audience of over 50 million people a year. That's a big constituency, but also a huge footprint. Everyone who wants to mitigate their travel can contribute to the European Festivals Forest. For every €2 given, a tree is planted in Iceland.

CARBON ACTION towards NET ZERO

€2 per tree

30-year cycle

3 trees per Carbon Tonne

European Festivals Forest
in partnership with

skógræktin
ICELANDIC FOREST SERVICE

Resources

- Ultimate Cookbook for Cultural Managers: The EU Green Deal and Live Performance Organisations: www.efa-aef.eu/en/news/2110-new-ultimate-cookbook-for-cultural-managers-the-eu-green-deal-and-live-performance-organisations
- Perform Europe: www.efa-aef.eu/en/news/2077-research-results-of-perform-europe
- International Festivals Declare Emergency: www.thefestivalacademy.eu/en/ifde
- Julie's bicycle: juliesbicycle.com