



EFFE Awards Salon 2019-2020

Speech by Sabine Verheyen

Chair of the European Parliament Culture Committee

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

It is an honour to speak to you tonight in my position as chair of the Committee for Culture and Education of the European Parliament. I was looking forward to this colourful evening with you, to celebrate festivals, celebrate music, theatre and arts, creative minds and people contributing to our common European cultural heritage.

For many Europeans, festivals are the entrance door to culture as such. Festivals have grown immensely in Europe over the last years, are today an important part of the vibrant cultural landscape, and are probably the closest to us Europeans, mobilising huge audiences. In addition to their direct benefits by bringing culture and arts to people, they also have a significant impact on social inclusion and the economic development of cities where they take place, contributing largely to tourism development and the creation of jobs.

Festivals of all different kinds bring together people from different socio-economic backgrounds, which makes them one of the most democratic cultural events and valuable platforms for audience participation. Many festivals are also increasingly international, cooperating with other festivals from all over Europe, and contributing to the European integration process. The strengthening of the cross-border dimension is crucial, as it leads also to greater mobility of artists.

I am happy to see tonight the success of the Pilot Project and Preparatory Action that was supported by the Parliament, "Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe". One of the main initiatives of the preparatory action is the database for festivals FestivalFinder.eu - an online search tool for audiences and festival lovers to find festivals to attend, and festival makers to find potential partners. It covers different artistic domains and now over 45 countries in Europe.

The role of festivals is also recognised in the Creative Europe programme. The Parliament has tabled amendments, currently under negotiation with the Council, which are aiming, for example, at increasing the mobility of artists and cultural operators through festivals, and to foster cooperation between festivals.

Festivals should reinvent themselves, innovate, reach new audiences and engage the existing ones. They should get digital in order to adjust to the needs of new audiences and to get more international, collaborate with others to increase their impact. Networking activities and collaboration aspects should be reinforced.

With the Committee of Culture and Education, you have a very supportive partner by your side.

We strongly support the calls for continuity of the project "Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe" in the future Creative Europe Program and are currently negotiating with the member States to follow our proposals. We are looking forward to continue our efforts, and with your help and support, we will have many festivals to celebrate ahead of us!

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a wonderful evening.