



Good afternoon everybody,

For this speech we were asked to look at our changing world and the way we see festivals reacting to it all across Europe, as well as the way EFA, as a network, proposes its work plan in an ever changing world.

**Our view as a network on European cooperation can be described as such: from networking to community building and engagement.**

I start with a quote of Denis de Rougemont, founder of the European Festivals Association, set up in '52, 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."

As festivals, and as networks, we work to foster solidarity. Today, as in '52, Europe is a continent of immense diversity, a cultural diversity that makes it rich and inspiring. That is a fact.

The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Moreover it is – or should be - characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between genders.

Before going into 'urgent' questions in our world, let's be clear: there are some guiding principles that are timeless, and that have been taken up in EFA's activities for the last 65 years - naively put at it may sound – to get the world together peacefully, to stand together and not fight with each other.

Also timeless is the fact that a network of festivals is - by definition - aimed at promoting cooperation and artistic diversity for we are intent on building a community that shares, exchanges and cooperates and we serve festivals whose goal is to allow its audience to access diverse artistic objects coming not only from different geographic locations but also from different views of the world. EFA fosters this 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. EFA aims to develop their capacity to cooperate more and better by catering to the needs of networking and skills development so that their qualified human capital can respond to changes and challenges faster and more efficiently.

This networking, or community building, is achieved by both the "classic" networking and, nowadays, a lot by using digital tools like websites, portals, digital platforms... What we conclude however is that, even in a digital world, the most effective and meaningful relations leading to true collaborations are built by meeting face to face.

What is new in EFA since its move to Brussels, 10 years ago, is that networking is enriched by actively building a festivals' community even beyond the EFA membership through taking concrete initiatives such as creating a cross-generational community with the Ateliers for Young Festival Managers, the Atelier for Production Managers, the future Atelier for financial managers, where 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, who have

“been-there-done-that-bought-the-T-shirt” and can provide a different perspective, maybe calmer and certainly more informed by experience.

Another example is creating a cross-disciplinary community with EFFE, a new inclusive festivals community from many artistic focus (and from many different sizes) that share the same values of artistic commitment, involvement in their local communities and a European and global outlook.

This new community brings together festivals that share similar ambitions to get their audiences thinking about the world they live in.

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.

As we said, **EFA is also acting in the cultural, political, social context of a specific time**, and as such **it is changing with its times**. Our agenda is defined by the urgent questions of today through the topics we follow in festivals.

Economic crisis, growing nationalism, dictatorships, fear of the other (yes, surprisingly still in our day and age) are all risks in our societies. The question is then: 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 the values that live in people hearts and minds? Are they **human dignity**, liberty, **democracy**, equality, **the rule of law**, respect for human rights? 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?

### **A lot can be learnt by looking at festivals’ artistic choices and at their growing outreach programmes**

Being relevant in our societies means understanding its ever-changing nature. Not only ‘classical’ questions of age, disability, minorities in audience analysis, but also the flowing nature of our societies because it is this fluidity that changes societies’ ‘face’ so quickly: mobility that allows us to move quickly from a to b and the digital environment that allows us to be everywhere at the same time. 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 and ask questions like: is it our duty to ‘convince’ the ‘non-believers’ of the possibility of a better society? Do we need to engage more in the countryside? With elderly people? With migrants? Is it our role to reply to ‘urgent’ questions or do we fulfil a ‘case for humanity’ just with the choices of artists and works we programme based on the artistic vision?

The question behind audience development remains one of citizenship and real participation (or **cultural democracy** as Peter Inkei calls it): it’s not the numbers of consumption **but the quality of a long term engagement**, dialogue, empowerment, empathy and sense of community and ownership that will have a lasting impact on society<sup>1</sup>.

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**.

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<sup>1</sup> see Eurobarometer: *the feeling of community comes with culture in the first place*



### BOZAR

Paul Dujardin believes in working with the diaspora for it's our city so we should all feel represented  
Does it with

Expos: Congo Art works – popular painting or the Africa Pop Up Museum

Conferences: Migration & expulsions with Saskia Sassen (last year)

Performances: die Fremden by Johan Simons

Also reaching for new audiences

Expos guided by the curator – a different insight on why and how the artists created

Bozar Electronics Festival – huge success

### 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**

Going into values:

### 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.

Continuing with values:

### Ruhrtriennale

Johan Simons' editorial for the 2017 **introduces a programme with the vision of highlighting the values of liberty,  
equality and fraternity**

it reminds us that it can be achieved with the help of the Arts for they open "our heads and sometimes our  
hearts". (piece Die Fremden)

Putting these values into practice:

### 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

And to finish with the creative minds themselves, the ones **at the very core of everything the rest of us do**, artists are often way ahead of the political and social trends and are working on what they already “**sense in the air**” **before it becomes the buzzword of the month** like the piece Daral Shaga – Kris Defoort, Fabrice Murgia and Philippe de Coen - which as journalist Siegfried Forster puts it “tells the tale of the tragedy of immigration, the journey of beings wounded by exile and the history of a wall between two worlds.”<sup>2</sup> It seems to tick every box of the “today guidelines” right? They have started working on this 2011 (it premiered in September 2014)

So **EFA changes with its times** because it adapts its activities to the needs of the festivals to better help them **lead by example** and be cooperative, be generous, be inclusive, ask questions and share answers.

**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**.

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<sup>2</sup> *Siegfried Forster in Les Voix du Monde* <http://www.rfi.fr/culture/20140926-daral-shaga-laurent-gaude-triple-salto-reussi-premier-opera-circassien-francophonies-limousin>