

In this increasingly globalised and multicultural society, facing cultural diversity has become a major challenge. Migratory flows and the successive enlargements of the European Union have brought the European peoples and cultures into continuous contact and exchange, so that living in a multicultural community has become the norm for millions of people.

The significance and the role of culture in the process of European integration are aspects which can no longer be ignored. In this new social context, the different facets of the cultural identity of the individual and of the local communities are constantly subject to a process of renewal and revision. Festivals have been playing a key role in this process, as they represent an ideal location where, in a festive atmosphere, the different cultural streams and phenomena closely linked to immigration and multicultural communities find an ideal place for free and peaceful expression. They have always been powerful promoters of the protection of the fundamental right of freedom of expression and their programmes helped to boost the circulation of ideas and people, the creation of a more peaceful coexistence and the promotion of an active European citizenship.

European arts festivals initiated a vital process of circulating and giving visibility to the different cultural streams of European arts and cultures, which represented a significant step toward the development of intercultural competences. Festivals, while respecting and promoting the regional and national diversity of the local communities, cultures, values and traditions, have at the same time been highlighting a common European heritage by promoting a culture of mutual exchange and respect for cultural diversity. Disadvantaged people, youth and minorities living in this more open and complex society must be given, like all other people who are temporarily living in the EU, the possibility of accessing active citizenship.

Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and the economic impact of culture have now gained a top position on the agenda of the EU. The decision of the European Union to declare 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is the latest step in a long-term plan to create an ever closer union between the peoples of Europe as well as providing all citizens with the opportunity of participating actively in intercultural dialogue in order to strengthen the coexistence of different cultural identities and beliefs, to highlight their common heritage, and at the same time to acknowledge and look respectfully at the differences of individual and local experiences.

**Festivals play a powerful role in turning a multicultural society into an intercultural society, a strategic step in the process of integration:**

- First of all, **festivals reach broad audiences**. The number of people attending festivals keeps increasing, which in turn shows a growing interest in the events organised in the frameworks of festivals. Reaching the largest number of people for the promotion intercultural dialogue is an important goal, as there cannot be any intercultural interaction if the people have no means to get in touch.
- Festivals give **artists** from all over the world the opportunity of increasing and developing their artistic experience, thus initiating a process of mutual exchange of artistic excellence among different countries. In particular, the artists-in-residence programmes allow artists to live and work in new contexts and to combine their own experience with the local one, creating a positive and illuminating example of **integration**.
- Differently from other media, the audiences attending festival events are encouraged to actively participate in them. Festivals, conceived as plural and open moments to be shared and participated in by the largest number of people, enhance the concept of **participation** and promote a **sense of belonging**, as they are expressions of a local community, but at the same time address international and European topics.
- Festivals boost **cultural tourism**. Every year millions of visitors decide to attend festivals in different regions or countries, coming into contact with new and different cultures and learning about foreign traditions and history.
- Festivals are unique **expressions of the local community**, as they are firmly rooted in the local environment, but they are also very often linked to national and international contexts. They are challenges to local traditions - as they acknowledge cultural diversity - but at the same time they also stimulate innovation and respect the common cultural heritage.
- Festivals play a unique role in the context of **education** by promoting a culture of peace and shaping understanding and respect amongst groups of people. Fringe activities, extensive use of new technologies, schemes and activities conceived especially for young people are particularly useful tools to **reach youths** and communicate with them, sharing values such as respect for other cultures, and launching education processes in the field of intercultural exchange.
- Outreach and fringe activities provide easy and open access to the cultural activities of festivals for all kinds of audiences, attracting all kinds of people, thus enhancing the process of **social inclusion**. More and more festivals' events take place in convivial atmospheres and in open venues which can be accessed basically by all, including disadvantaged people and ethnic or cultural minorities.

**Festivals and other parties signing this Declaration are engaged:**

- In building an effective intercultural dialogue, in the conviction that such a dialogue represents an essential tool for peaceful interaction among different cultures, ethnic groups, religions, languages, beliefs and social backgrounds. Such interaction will in turn encourage a respectful and enriching exchange of ideas and help identify the boundaries that define individuals and communities;
- In raising the awareness of artists, managers, collaborators, volunteers regarding Intercultural Dialogue conceived as a **respectful and free exchange among communities** and individuals and aimed at the promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity which is indispensable for the protection of human rights and democracy;
- In opposing stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and ignorance about different, foreign or minority cultures and are committed to and engaged in promoting Intercultural Dialogue in the framework of the European Year and for the years to come by mobilising their collective creative resources and celebrating participation as a bond among people;
- In disseminating the European Year documents and its core ideas to the largest number of people possible and ensuring visibility for the logo, brochures and all communication and information materials referring to the European Year in order to promote its essence and objectives.

Signed in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 8 January 2008  
in the framework of the official opening  
of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue  
by the following initial signatory parties:

Ján Figel'  
European Commissioner  
for Education, Training,  
Culture and Youth

Zoran Janković  
Mayor of Ljubljana

European Festivals Association

Darko Brlek  
President

Hugo De Greef  
Secretary General

Ljubljana Festival  
Darko Brlek Artistic and General Director

Belgrade Music Festival  
Sreten Krstić Artistic Director

Dubrovnik Festival  
Ivica Prlender General Director

Ohrid Summer Festival  
Toni Simonovski Director

International Festival Sarajevo  
Sarajevo Winter  
Ibrahim Spahić Director

Music Biennale Zagreb  
Ivo Josipović Director

International Gaudeamus  
Music Week Amsterdam  
Henk Heuvelmans Director

Festival d'Avignon  
Hortense Archambault Director

Festival de Barcelona Grec  
Ricardo Szwarcer Director

Berliner Festspiele  
Joachim Sartorius Director

Edinburgh International Festival  
Joanna Baker Managing Director

Emilia Romagna Festival  
Massimo Mercelli President

Flanders Festival  
Jan Briers General Manager

Festival Internacional  
de Música y Danza de Granada  
Enrique Gámez Ortega Director

Istanbul International  
Music Festival  
Yesim Güler Oymak Director

Festival Filosofia Modena  
Roberto Franchini President

Rheingau Musik Festival  
Michael Herrmann Director

RomaEuropa Festival  
Monique Veaute General Director

Santander International Festival  
José Luis Ocejo Director

St. Olav Festival Trondheim  
Per Kvistad Uddu Director

Vilnius Festival  
Ruta Prusevičienė Executive Director

Wiener Festwochen  
Wolfgang Wais Director