



REMAINING TOGETHER IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In response to covid-19 pandemic, European countries are deploying unprecedented emergency tactics and a warlike language. The "[invisible enemy](#)" is weakening not only the public health and labour systems across the continent deeply affected by the austerity policies of the last decade, but is also putting under threat the European project as we know it.

Global crisis requires collaboration of all governments as it shows us our interdependence. Reacting to this multilevel crisis calls for a strong and united European response that respects foundations of the European Union, its core values and the EU's four fundamental freedoms - movement of people, services, goods and capital. "Fortress Europe" that shuts itself from the pandemic and the rest of the world evokes the idea that the threat comes from outside. Populism and anti-European sentiments are gaining more ground as national governments take uncoordinated actions.

In these difficult times, European Union should act stronger and show more ambition while respecting its fundamental values. Citizens want to see "[a united Europe, willing and ready to act, that is finally on the field to tackle this dramatic challenge](#)". The European Commission and EU governments should come with a common response to the pandemics and an **EU-wide plan to restart the European social, cultural and environmental welfare afterwards**. The EU should move quickly on approving Multiannual Financial Framework increasing the budget to at least 1,3% of the EU GNI, **investing more in the "Cohesion and Values" heading, including the arts and culture**, to bring Europe closer to its citizens. Culture is the foundation of who we are as human beings. It grounds our collective life, binding us together, nurturing our feeling of belonging. Without the explicit recognition of the European project's cultural dimension, the future of the European Union as a common endeavour is difficult to imagine.

Covid-19 has hit the arts and culture sector severely. Cultural operators make enormous efforts to maintain activities that can ease people's feeling of isolation. But with cultural venues closed, performances, festivals cancelled, the sector is already impacted by the immediate economic, social, cultural and human consequences. Workers in the sector, who are often in an already precarious situation (self-employed, freelancers) are left for months without any income. In order to **sustain European cultural life, national governments and EU institutions must adopt emergency measures** that specifically and adequately support the sustainability of the cultural ecosystems. In this regard, we urge the European Commission to make the **25 billion emergency package to Europe's economy also available to the arts and culture sector**.

In confinement, instead of social distancing we should practice physical distancing and social solidarity. As we go through these arduous times, let us take the moment to stop and reflect. Which Europe do we want to live in after the crisis is over? Are we ready to rethink our collective and individual aspirations regarding our communities and our common goods? Are we ready to take actions to tackle climate change together and to recognise culture's role in fair development? Will we be ready to address social inequalities and put solidarity above the immediate economic gains? **Instead of going back to business as usual, will the governments pluck up courage to implement drastic systemic changes?**

If we manage to do it, we will come out of this crisis more united, stronger human beings sharing a sustainable European project.

SIGNATORIES:

Culture Action Europe Executive Committee members:

Robert Manchin, President, Culture Action Europe

Cristina Da Milano, President, ECCOM

Antonio Gucciardo, General Manager, Interarts

Burak Sayin, Community and Communications Manager, Trans Europe Halles

Corinne Szteinszneider, Coordinator, Michael Culture

Elena Polivtseva, Communication and Policy Manager, IETM

Inés Câmara, co-founder, Mapa das Ideias

Lars Ebert, Program Director, H401

Niels Righolt, Director, CKI - the Danish Centre for Arts & Intercultural

Silvia Costa, former MEP and chair of the CULT Committee

Simona Neumann, CEO, Timisoara 2021

Stefan Gies, Chief Executive, Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC)

Culture Action Europe team members:

Tere Badia, Secretary General

Kornelia Kiss, Operations Director

Natalie Giorgadze, Communication & Community Director

Nicolò Rosada, Communications Assistant

ABOUT CULTURE ACTION EUROPE:

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU. As the only intersectoral network, it brings together all practices in culture, from the performing arts to literature, the visual arts, design and cross-arts initiatives, to community centres and activist groups.

CAE believes in the value and values of culture and its contribution to the development of sustainable and inclusive societies.

www.cultureactioneurope.org