



Press release March 2021

Urgent survival strategies - perspectives for the independent performing arts sector 2021

Ever since the COVID-19 crisis has taken hold of our lives, we have witnessed the shortcomings, fragility and precariousness of our sector. Since March 2020, there are no stable working conditions for artists, which very much affects the entire artistic production process of development, research, rehearsal, presentation and touring. And this situation will continue, as there is currently no realistic end to the lockdowns and to the danger of getting infected – plus there are no reliable and safe working structures, especially for artists. To summarize: There is no reliable perspective for independent performing artists.

Especially now, with the experience of the lockdown measures since the end of October 2020, it becomes clear that there is no possibility to continue with the artistic work processes as they used to be before the pandemic. The entire sector will – and has to – change enormously and is currently in a phase of transition.

The artists are dealing with new content and formats. In parallel, the responsible politicians and authorities in charge of the structures need to change their perspectives as well and have to support the upcoming adaptations proactively.

In practical terms, this means:

- In every single country, money from the **EU recovery fund** must be used for contemporary art forms, especially dedicated towards the independent performing arts sector, as people working in this sector are affected the most by lockdown measures.
- We have learned from 2020 that the dependencies between the artists and the presenters (theatres, festivals ...) must be restructured according to the **principles of 'fairness'**. This affects e.g., contracts including cancellation or postponing clauses, communication between all participants, a new understanding of responsibility (especially if public money is involved), including all participants of the artistic value chain. In some countries, these processes have already started and will hopefully become examples of **'fair practice'**.
- The entire sector requires support to become more **stable and sustainable**. The current situation affects the working and presentation processes artists are used to. Therefore, the artistic development and presentation process will change and must be covered by **clever and new funding structures** that include a continuous focus on the protection of the single artist.
- Artistic work will need new and other **spaces and structures**. There is an urgent need for proper space solutions and permeable settings, which allow safe rehearsal conditions for the artists and safe meeting and presentation possibilities between artists and their audiences. The responsible politicians are encouraged to support these structural developments. In the long run, this will also very much encourage audience development.



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- It will be essential **not to cut any funding** for the 2021 period and beyond. Artistic work and productions must continue and be allowed to expand, as art is crucial for the social health and security of society.
- Re-establishing transnational work, international cooperation and shared artistic projects, **touring and mobility** are core values of the independent arts sector and will help overcome the re-emergence of nationalist tendencies, which have spread during the past few months and weeks. We need supporting programmes once our mobility gets re-established.
- Again, we strongly recommend a **social security system for individual artists and cultural workers** that grants the right to access social benefits, such as unemployment benefits and all other tools which are available to people in ordinary employment structures. As we have learned through Covid-19, unemployment benefits and the possibility to profit from short-time work are essential for the individuals to get through this crisis.

Together with researcher Thomas Fabian Eder and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, the European Association for Independent Performing Arts - EAIPA is currently making a major effort to collect data for an empirical study examining the economic and socio-political situation of the independent performing arts throughout Europe.

The study will present comprehensive data to describe the field as a European phenomenon while highlighting similarities and differences between the various countries. All results will be made available to EAIPA's advocacy organizations, which can use them to improve the working and living conditions as well as the status of independent cultural professionals in their respective countries. First interim results are expected in autumn 2021.

EAIPA's platform constantly shares experiences, both positive and negative, to safeguard the performing arts in the long run. We now identified the most important issues that need to be addressed towards the public and to responsible politicians, to raise awareness and highlight the transition process the sector is going through.

President and board of European Association of Independent Performing Arts
Ulrike Kuner / Austria, Inga Remeta / Slovenia, Axel Tangerding / Germany, Fridrik Fridriksson / Iceland, Nina M. Kohler / Switzerland, Davide Dantonio / Italy, Zoltan Imély / Hungary

Quotes from our members:

Teatercentrum, Sweden

The start of this decade left us a lot to wish for. Let's hope the new year will bring back the audiences into the theatres, because it's so terribly empty without, and may the politicians be guided by a new awareness of the fragility but also the absolute importance of live art in society, to strengthen the funds and infrastructure for the long-living, lively and diverse independent performing arts. We are so much looking forward to new artistic meetings this year!

IG Freie Theaterarbeit, Austria

'Through Covid, we witnessed the importance of 'fairness' for and within the sector. For 2021, our



wishes and aims are to realize concrete betterment for the independent performing artists on a structural level. If we could establish 'fair trade' and 'fair production' for tea, chocolate and orange juice – why not for the artistic processes?'

Asociace nezávislých divadel, Czech Republic

The Independent Performing Arts sector in the Czech Republic was strongly impacted by the pandemic. However, for the Association 2020 was also a year of several positive changes. The Association became a strong partner for the Ministry of Culture and was recognized as an important part of the cultural sector for media as well. The independent sector has realized that only together it can be heard and achieve its goals. What we are really afraid of are the following years as the lack of finance will lead to the lower support of culture as it was already announced by some authorities.

Association of Independent Theatres in Iceland (AITI), Iceland

The Icelandic performing arts scene was already in a precarious state before the coronavirus hit, and the situation has only gotten worse during the pandemic. However, the silver lining is that the pandemic has exposed how precarious the working conditions of independent artists are. Hopefully, this will lead to a broader understanding of the inner workings of the independent scene. We share the hope with our European partners that our voices will be heard and taken into account when planning the future of the arts.

Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste (BFDK), Germany

"The Corona situation, working under strict hygiene regulations and the lockdown with the prohibition of public events and rehearsals has led many artists to the edge of their economic existence. The limits and deficits of the social security systems in Germany became particularly clear during and through the pandemic. This is especially true for the many solo freelancing artists who often fall through the cracks. Important issues for the time after the crisis are the further development of social security systems, especially concerning the solo freelancing artists (insurance of periods without projects as a counterpart to unemployment insurance, stronger and more accurate inclusion in the system of statutory pension insurance, etc.). Fundamental changes are also needed in the area of funding - away from single-project funding towards longer-term funding for artists or artist groups."

Društvo Asociacija, Slovenia

"The Slovenian independent performing arts sector is facing particularly challenging times. In addition to the heavy restrictions put in place to prevent the further spread of the virus - which inevitably had a devastating impact on the cultural sector - the pandemic came at the same time as a new government that does not favour modern art. Some general governmental measures have been instated, but unfortunately, none of them specially catered to the needs of artists and cultural workers. "Asociacija" and other representative organisations have proposed different measures that could help the cultural sector but sadly there is no more structured dialogue between the ministry and the sector as there has been during previous administrations. Instead of support, there were several direct and indirect attacks on the progressive arts amidst this very severe health crisis - such as the minister of culture blocking an already commission-approved status for artists or an attempt at evicting NGOs from the only building provided by the ministry for this sector. All in all, the epidemic and political situation is not in favour of the cultural sector in Slovenia but nevertheless, there is lots of hope that normalization will come shortly."



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**EAIPA European Association
of Independent Performing Arts**

EAIPA, the European Association of Independent and Performing Arts, currently represents the independent performing arts sector of 17 European countries. The umbrella organisation EAIPA was founded in September 2018.

EAIPA operates at B2B level, its members being interest groups or representatives of the individual member countries, which in turn represent the actors from the Independent Performing Arts field. Therefore, EAIPA represents people, companies and theatres working in Europe's independent Performing Arts sector, and it responds to Europe's cultural policy-making by collecting up-to-date information about the field, initiating new policy proposals and raising visibility for the needs and achievements of the sector.

The designation 'independent performing arts community' comprises all professional freelance theatre-makers, artistic ensembles, independent institutions and structures working in the genres of dance, theatre, performance, music, children's and youth theatre as well as overall interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary artistic work.

List of members:

AUSTRIA: IG Freie Theaterarbeit /Austrian Association of Independent Performing Arts

Gumpendorferstraße 63B, AT – 1060 Wien

www.freietheater.at

BULGARIA: АСТОЦИАЦИЯ ЗА СВОБОДЕН ТЕАТЪР / ACT – Association of Independent Performing Arts

Art office, bul. Macedonia 17, fl. 4, ap. 21, BUL – Sofia 1606

www.actassociation.eu/

CZECH REPUBLIC: Asociace nezávislých divadel ČR

Celetná 595/17, CZE – 110 00 Praha 1-Staré Město

<http://andcr.cz/>

GERMANY: Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste e.V.

Kunstquartier Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, DEU – 10997 Berlin

www.darstellende-kuenste.de

FINLAND: THEATTERIKESKUS – Theatre Centre

Eerikinkatu 3 – 00100 Helsinki

www.teatterikeskus.fi/english

HUNGARY: Független Előadó-művészeti Szövetség (FESZ) / Association of Independent Performing Arts Professionals

Bulcsú utca 44, HU – 1155 Budapest

<http://www.fesz.org/>

ICELAND: Association of Independent Theatres in Iceland (AITI)

Tjarnargata 12, ISL – 101 Reykjavik

<http://new.leikhopar.is/en/>



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EAIPA European Association
of Independent Performing Arts

ITALY: Etre associazione

Via Bergognone 34, ITA – 20144 Milano
<http://www.etreassociazione.it>

ITALY: Cordinamento delle Realtà Scena Contemporanea (C.Re.S.Co.)

Via Natale del Grand 27, ITA – 00153 Roma
<http://www.progettocresco.it/>

ROMANIA: ASOCIAȚIA TEATRELOR INDEPENDENTE

Viorele street, no. 34, bl. 15, apt.2, sector 4, RO – 40429 Bucharest

SLOVAKIA: Académia divadelných tvorcov

Skolská 14, SK – 811 07 Bratislava
www.adt-theatre.sk

SLOVENIA: Društvo Asociacija

Metelkova 6, SI – 1000 Ljubljana
www.asociacija.si

SPAIN: Red de Teatros Alternativos – Spain

Apartado de correos 18269, ES – 28080, Madrid
www.redteatrosalternativos.org

SWEDEN: Verksamhetsledare Danscentrum Riks

Hornsgatan 103, 8tr 117 28 Stockholm
www.danscentrum.se

SWEDEN: Teatercentrum

Hornsgatan 103, SE – 117 28 Stockholm
www.teatercentrum.se

**SWITZERLAND: t. Theaterschaffende Schweiz, Professionnels du spectacle Suisse,
Professionisti dello spettacolo Svizzera**

Waisenhausplatz 30, Atelier 157, CH – 3011 Bern
www.tpunkt.ch/

UKRAINE: Association Independent Theatre

47, Trostyaneska st. quarter 180 – Kyiv 02175
www.facebook.com/associateUnt/