

Seminar “Culture for the Eastern Partnership” Lublin, March 8–10, 2013

The seminar “Culture for the Eastern Partnership” was organized in order to set the concept of the second edition of the **Eastern Partnership Culture Congress** and its accompanying event, “**Integrations – Mediations**” Festival to be held on **October 1–6, 2013**, which will be part of the East of Culture project.

The East of Culture is a new form of cultural collaboration between the cities of Eastern Poland and the Eastern Partnership member countries. It will for the first time that three Polish cities: Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów, will discover new opportunities of cultural cooperation aimed at promoting culture across borders, artistic and cultural exchange, and the mobility of both artists and art works. The project was launched thanks to the involvement of both artistic circles and Eastern Poland local authorities, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the Polish National Centre for Culture.

The seminar gathered more than 100 participants representing culture-building milieus of the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The two-day seminar included panel discussions, meetings of task groups and presentations of best practices of cross-border cooperation in the Eastern Partnership countries.

The seminar was accompanied by a presentation of the Y Gallery from Minsk (Belarus) and the contemporary Belarusian art.

The work of the seminar participants concerned three thematic areas:

- working out the essential foundations for discussions and the work of task groups during the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress,
- elaboration of practical recommendations for the organizers of the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress,
- preparation of the Integrations festival aiming at presenting the up-to-date situation of culture in the EaP countries.

The seminar participants worked within the following task groups:

GROUP A – ADVANCED TRAINING SESSION

GROUP B – SHARING EXPERIENCES

GROUP C – WHICH JOINT INITIATIVES ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED?

GROUP D – COMBINING THE CONGRESS WITH THE INTEGRATIONS FESTIVAL

GROUP E – WHO SHOULD TAKE PART IN THE CONGRESS?

GROUP F – PARTICULAR SOLUTIONS IMPROVING THE CONGRESS’ EFFICIENCY

In the course of the discussions, the following conclusions regarding the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress have been proposed.

- The thematic scope of the Congress should include the issues and set the goals which are practicable and relevant to today’s reality.
- As far as regards the cultural policies of the European Union and the Eastern Partnership

countries, the Congress should set up particular recommendations concerning both practical solutions fostering international cooperation and its ideological dimension.

- The process of implementing the Congress recommendations should be monitored.
- The impact of the changes resulting from the Congress recommendations must be analysed and the conclusions of the analysis made public.
- The Congress should conclude with a broad declaration concerning the culture-building issues and values in the context of the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU.
- All the Congress decisions should be taken in a democratic way.
- The circle of the Congress participants should include numerous representatives of the culture-building milieus from every country: cultural workers, NGO activists, intellectuals, but also recipients of culture (with special regard to national minorities and immigrants with expertise in the political, economic and social situation far exceeding one country's experience), those who operate in the border zone between culture and business as well as ecology.
- It is crucial to consider the possibility of reaching out beyond the framework of the Eastern Partnership project to include Russia, Turkey, the Balkan countries, North Africa, Near East, the Caucasus and some Asian countries.
- The Congress is first and foremost the meeting of cultural workers, the site for sharing experiences and discussions on the up-to-date situation of the culture sector in Europe, for meeting and gaining partners for projects.
- The Congress should retain an anti-congress approach. It should be supremely democratic, allowing for shaping discussions by all the participants, aimed at nuts-and-bolts work on groups of issues. The Congress openness should make itself felt both in terms of content and the system of work, which is to be achieved through adopting the Congress rules and antirules.

Basing on the conclusions from the panel discussions and the task groups meetings, the following set of recommendations mapping out the way of thinking about the organisation of the Congress (Manifesto) was worked out.

Manifesto of the 2013 Eastern Partnership Culture Congress:

1) We simplify the procedures (of registration, participation in discussions, work in task groups etc.)

2) We know what we prepare the Congress for. We have transparent goals which are adequate to enforceable results. We monitor the process and publicize the achieved results.

3) We offer well-balanced forms of communication. We are searching for a space for discussion situated between presentational (providing for passive recipients) and interactive forms. We want to replace the formula of lectures and papers by a real discussion.

4) We settle an agreement with the Congress participants concerning the quality of messages. During the Congress, we speak an understandable language and struggle to make our statements listener friendly.

We verify the suggestions sent by those applying for participation trying to keep to this rule.

5) We are open to grassroots needs. We accept participants' choices (such as choosing speakers,

the possibility to choose activities and workshops all by oneself etc.)

6) **We have respect for one another's time.**

7) **We aim at ensuring as many profound meetings as possible** (including non-formal, behind-the-scenes situations allowing for discussions and building partnerships around the issues we are interested in).

8) **We work together.** We aim at implementing the participation model every step of the way during the Congress organisation, starting with the preparatory stage, through the task groups' work, and ending up with the joint elaboration of the post-congress publication, e.g. in a form of a bookprint.

9) **We seek interaction with local communities,** but we do not know how to achieve this. One of the solutions may be free entrance to the accompanying events and a granting non-participants a wide access to discussions.

II. Manifesto of the Integrations festival and its formats

1) We want the Integrations festival not to be a one time event of a presentational kind. We care about creating the situations of exchange, co-production, art-residencies, contextual and interactive activities while emphasizing the uniqueness of a situation, its 'here and now' aspect.

2) We are worried with the political stain on some events in the EaP countries being the result of the particular countries' cultural policies or ideological implications. We want to provide a space for creative freedom or activities opposed to repressive policies.

3) We don't like top-down events with no regard to local reality. We do care about engaging various local communities including artists, schools, universities, local authorities, cultural centres and NGOs which would help enhance the potential of publicity potential of the event and provide volunteers' support.

4) We do care about the authenticity of events inspired by common Central-European experiences and positive examples of cooperation.

5) We want the event to be co-organised by the cultural milieus (institutions and NGOs) and authorities which are able to provide the promised quality.

Conclusions of the task groups working at the seminar

Group A

Advanced training session

The Congress is not a vehicle for gaining practical skills – it has to be a platform for setting common strategies and sharing information among its participants. In order to reach the set goal, workshops are to be held: addressed to the local community of Lublin; introducing the up-to-date artistic situation in the city hosting the Congress; addressed to managers and dealing with the key skills (creativity and enterprise); introducing legal issues of culture and cooperation with the administrative bodies (e.g. the Ministry of Culture).

Group B

Sharing experiences

- Discussions should focus on available instruments of providing sustainable development in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- In the course of discussions their participants should work out how music and art can contribute to the development of local communities.
- Sharing experience sessions should be organised.
- Sessions should be participated by local communities and local authority bodies operating in the field of culture.
- Discussions should touch on the problems of particular organisations and projects they

- implement, as well as financial and legal issues.
- Exhibitions concerning cultural tendencies in the region as well as exhibitions about particular countries of the eastern Partnership should be organised.

Group C

Which joint initiatives are to be implemented?

- Programs of residencies should be worked out.
- A key point to be considered is how to guarantee full professionalism in working out the strategies for international cooperation projects by cultural workers.
- Another meeting for the discussion of joint projects and ideas should be held after the Congress.
- Engagement of local media in the preparation, staging and evaluation of the Congress and its results.

Group D

Combining the Congress with the Integrations–Mediations festival

- The name of the Integrations festival should be replaced by another one, such as “Different Realities” – the participants do not want to integrate, but to show diversity, uniqueness, otherness.
- A clear division into different genres of art, such as music, visual arts etc. should be introduced at the festival.
- The festival program should be diversified to include various artists and projects referring to international and cross-border context.
- It is crucial to define the target audience of the festival.
- While preparing the program of the festival, it is important to seek for the external support.
- Authors of the festival program should get acquainted with the cultures of the states whose art will be presented at the festival.
- Local artists have to cooperate with the local community.

Group E

Who should take part in the Congress?

- The Congress should be publicised all over the world due to broadcasts and recordings.
- Before the Congress, lists of guests to be invited should be prepared.

The Congress should be participated by:

- local communities (artists, businesspeople)
- culture managers
- representatives of cultural institutions from other countries
- the civil society
- representatives of ecological organisations
- fund givers and decision-makers
- journalists, not only the local ones
- national minorities in Poland
- people from beyond the Eastern Partnership (the West of Europe)
- people from the European Union
- people from Turkey, Tunisia, North Africa, Lithuania, Russia, Burma
- the Mediterranean Basin
- the Balkan states
- the Chechen diaspora
- post-Soviet states from the Central Asia

Group F

Particular solutions improving the Congress' efficiency

A number of solutions should be provided for the Congress participants, including:

- free passes entitling the Congress participants to use city transport,
- places for meetings,
- information points,
- environment-friendly materials (partly available online),
- a digital interactive map with an application for smartphones
- a bulletin board,
- a tent with games, a place for informal meetings
- a sauna
- a database with information about the participants on the internet
- joint activities, location-based games
- a place for printing photos
- a space for having meals together (for all the participants)
- local food
- empty bags (everyone chooses what he likes, instead of taking a heavy fully packed bag)
- integration games
- a BarCamp

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