

Brussels, 14 October 2020

## **European Social Partners of the Live Performance Sector call for a coordinated action plan to secure the recovery and sustainability of the European cultural sector**

PEARLE\*- Live Performance Europe representing over 10 000 organisations and the EAEA – European Arts and Entertainment Alliance, representing more than 150 unions, guilds, and associations and over 600 000 performers, technicians and staff in the music, performing arts and live sector – are calling on the EU institutions and national governments to adopt a coordinated approach including short-term support measures and long-term investment to save the European cultural sector amid a resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic across Europe.

The urgent call for action echoes the concerns and demands of representatives of national employers' and workers' organisations voiced during the October 13<sup>th</sup> webinar *Covid-19: Outlook for the Live Performance Sector and Measures Needed*, jointly organized by PEARLE\* and the EAEA and which they had already stated at the beginning of the pandemic on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

The economic impact of the crisis has hit the sector very hard as venues were entirely shut down and countless tours and events were cancelled. The sector has a high percentage of SMEs, freelance and self-employed workers who are very vulnerable and often face limited access to, or overall exclusion from, cross-sector financial and economic relieve programmes or social support schemes that mitigate the impact of the crisis.

While the live performance sector has gradually been resuming activities since restrictions were lifted or adapted, it needs to operate under strict safety protocols protecting the workforce and the audience that inevitably also imply higher costs, less revenue and fewer employment opportunities. With the resurgence of the pandemic in recent weeks, the immediate future and the outlook for the next twelve months are uncertain, putting the economic sustainability of organisations and the careers of hundreds of thousands of professionals at risk. It is also unsure what this will mean in the mid-term and longer term perspective, as many on the ground estimate it will take at least three years to come back to the level before the crisis.

Speaking at their joint webinar, representatives of the European social partners emphasised the urgency of the situation: “The live performance sector is undergoing the worst crisis ever and our cultural diversity is at stake. Without adequate support, many cultural organisations will need to permanently close their doors; qualified workers will leave their profession. Now is the time for governments to include our sector as a priority in their recovery plans and ensure resilience for live performance organisations and workers” said Tania Swayne of Spanish live performance employers association FAETEDA and vice-President of Pearle\*. Denys Fouqueray, of the Syndicat Français des Artistes-Interprètes, vice-president of FIA, representing the European Arts and Entertainment Alliance (EAEA) echoed this fear, observing that: “Live performance is ailing. Unless policymakers agree to include it in current and future recovery plans, hundreds of thousands of jobs and the sustainability of our sector are at risk. This would be an irreparable loss for Europe, for cultural diversity and ultimately also for artistic freedom”.

The EU recovery package and existing policies and measures should more explicitly instruct member states to provide targeted support in order to meet the challenges that the sector is facing. At EU level, there is still a lack of a sector-specific plan and instruments. The access for the cultural sector to existing and future cross-sector instruments is neither guaranteed nor facilitated, such as for instance to the REACT EU help scheme under the cohesion funds, the Digital Europe programme or the Creative Europe Programme. The proposed cuts in the InvestEU 2021-2027 programme could further limit access to vital funding for organisations of the live performance sector. The lack of coordination among Member States with regards to travel and safety measures and exemptions for artists, cultural professionals and organisations who need to be able to tour to make a living further slows down a sector that highly depends on the cross-border mobility. Moreover, it puts the European Treaty objective to ensure cultural diversity under question.

This needs to change.

The European Social Partners underline the urgency and seriousness of this situation and the grave peril the live performance and, in fact, the entire cultural sector are facing. It is vital, that general and cross-sector programmes are also made to include the live performance sector, with sector specific measures addressing the actual needs of SMEs, freelance and self-employed workers. This strategy cannot be based on ad-hoc measures that may or not may be extended, but must be built instead on a long-term investment commitment to secure the sustainability of the European cultural sector.

Closing the webinar session on October 13<sup>th</sup>, Petra Kammerevert, S&D MEP and member of the CULT committee emphasised the parliament's support for the sector and urged policymakers to act now, saying "let's make a new start for culture". In September, the European Parliament called for 2% of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to be earmarked for the cultural and creative sector. The German EU Presidency underlined that managing the consequences of Covid-19 was a priority for the coming months. We applaud these commitments and urge decision makers to follow through.

The time to act is now.

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