



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Venice Office
Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe



SOFIA
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

UNESCO Forum

Balkan Visions: Creativity for the Future in South-East Europe

17 March 2012 - Sofia, Bulgaria

Background

A new global initiative entitled “Culture: a Bridge to Development” has been officially launched by the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs Irina Bokova, at the ninth Summit of Heads of State of South Eastern Europe, which met in Viminacium, Serbia, on 2 September 2011.

This framework initiative, proposed by a number of Member States for inclusion in the biennial Programme and Budget for 2012-2013 of UNESCO, has been approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 36th session (October-November 2011).

This initiative aims at promoting innovative and creative approaches which enhance culture as a bridge to sustainable social, economic and human development. It seeks to support bridges within the civil society, among artists, intellectuals, teachers and creators, with a view to exchanging new ideas and visions; to support regional think tanks, innovative networks and platforms that span the region – through cross-borders festivals, exchanges of artefacts between museums of different countries, travelling exhibitions, etc; to reinforce their markets and access to international fora.

The European Commission published in April 2010 a Green Paper on “Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries”. It shows that the cultural industries, which include publishing, music, cinema, crafts and design, continue to grow steadily apace and have a determinant role to play in the future of culture. Their international dimension gives them a determining role for the future in terms of freedom of expression, cultural diversity and economic development. In fact, creative and cultural industries are one of Europe's most dynamic sectors, contributing around 2.6 % to the EU GDP, with a high growth potential, and providing quality jobs to around 5 million people across EU-27.

Against this background, and within UNESCO's framework of activities related to the promotion of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, this Forum aims at continuing the debate of the role of culture and creativity (hereby including the arts as well as cultural industries) in fostering sustainable development. It is a follow-up to the first regional forum « Writing, publishing, translating: building cultural diversity in South-East Europe”, organized by the UNESCO Venice Office on 31 March-2 April 2011 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, within the celebrations of “Ljubljana - World Book Capital City”.

The forum is organized in cooperation with the Sofia International Film Festival (9-25 March 2012), within the framework of the "Sofia Meetings" (15-18 March 2012). The “Sofia Meetings” is an event of the festival supported by the MEDIA programme of the European Union. It aims to promote new projects from young European filmmakers and new films from Bulgaria and the Balkan region and to establish professional links with other European film festivals, sales agents and distributors. The Sofia Meetings serves as a platform of discussion and exchanges for producers, directors, world sales, distributors, representatives of financing organizations and film festivals.

Objectives

This Forum seeks to sketch a portrait of the South-East European region through the lens of creativity, and engage civil society, including artists and creators, in a dialogue to learn about new developments and challenges they foresee for the future that can inform the introduction of policies and strategies to foster sustainable human and economic development.

This forum will bring together, in the form of an international public encounter (lectures and thematic round tables, together with discussions with the public), a group of artists and creators who are contributing to the reshaping of the cultural and artistic contemporary landscape in South-East Europe, and to the rapid changing of the image and perception of the region, in terms of creativity, innovation and modernity.

Participants, together with the public, are asked to discuss topics such as: the social, political and economic environment for artistic activities; the development of responsive frameworks and tools which encourage artistic creativity, innovation and cultural entrepreneurship; transnational mobility challenges and funding opportunities, challenges for European cooperation.

Youth, students, universities, art schools, media, cultural professionals and managers, artists and creators, curators, professionals working in cultural industries are cordially invited to attend and participate in the discussions.

On the occasion of the Forum, a series of video art performances will be presented.

Expected Results

It is anticipated that this forum can bring together the cutting edge of contemporary creation from the South-East European region and engage in a dialogue about the future of policies to support creativity in the future.

A set of strategic recommendations to reinforce schemes for the promotion of cultural industries in South-East Europe will be discussed during the debates, formalized during the conclusions, and brought to the attention of the next Ministerial conference on cultural heritage of SEE Ministers of culture, to be hosted in Sofia, Bulgaria in September 2012, with the support of UNESCO.

The Sofia International Film Festival and the Sofia Meetings

The Sofia International Film Festival is the leading film festival in Bulgaria. It began in 1997 and attracts more than 70 000 spectators annually. The festival aims to promote important and innovative works of modern world cinema to local audiences and regional Bulgarian and Balkan cinema to international audiences, as well as to encourage cooperation between local and international filmmakers. The festival has an International Competition for first and second feature films and documentaries, as well as a Competition for Balkan features and Bulgarian Shorts. It is included in the FIPRESCI calendar. In 2010 the festival was accredited by FIAPF as a competitive specialized feature film festival and became the only Bulgarian film festival recognized by FIAPF. Almost 30 world famous filmmakers have received the Sofia Award for Contribution in cinema; among them are Wim Wenders, Claudia Cardinale, Alan Parker, Theo Angelopoulos, Jean-Claude Carriere, Rangel Valchanov, Volker Shoendorff, Peter Greenaway, Otar Iosseliani, Jiri Menzel, Nikita Mikhalkov, Michael Palin, Giuliano Montaldo, Jan Troell.

The Sofia Meetings is an event organized within the framework of the Sofia International Film Festival. It is oriented towards professional audience and includes: Feature Films Pitching (presentation of first, second or third feature film projects of director/producer, looking for financial support and cooperation) and Balkan Screenings (showcase of the latest Bulgarian and regional films). During Sofia Meetings are organized different training initiatives, workshops, panels on topics of interest to international and local professionals, and students.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Session 1 – Putting a country on the international film map: experiences from South-East Europe

This session aims to offer a platform of discussion for cinema artists and professionals from Southeast Europe, who are experiencing major changes and transformations in policies and mechanisms related to financing, production, distribution. While new opportunities arise, in particular as a result of technological progress and its impact on reduction of production costs an improved access to films, films are still not finding a fair share on screens within the region and beyond. It is therefore opportune to support dynamic film festivals, develop new and innovative business models, invent alternative ways of distribution, pave the way for a greater circulation of films produced in the region, and encourage co-productions. Drawing on major experiences from South-East Europe on the development of cinema industry, this panel brings together new generations of cinema professionals to discuss and share views on cinema productions, innovative film festivals, key industry promotional events (Sofia Meetings, CinELink Sarajevo, Romanian Days, Meetings on the Bridge, etc) and various innovative support schemes (Sarajevo Talent Campus, “Operation Kino”, etc) to sustain and promote the film industry in South-East Europe. This session should also offer the opportunity to ask ourselves: To what degree can we speak of Balkan/Southeast European cinema? And what do we like best about the cinema of this region today?

Session 2 – New urban spaces and creativity: fostering creative cities for development in South-East Europe

Cities play a vital role in harnessing creativity for economic and social development. Policy makers and government agencies are increasingly taking account of cultural creativity when planning economic policy and of the role culture can play in urban renewal (ex: European Capital for Culture, Universal Expo, cultural industry clusters, etc). On the one hand, creativity contributes to a city's social fabric, cultural diversity and sense of community, helping defining shared identities based on values of inclusion. On the other, creativity is a vital element in fostering development, job creation and income generation, having an overall impact on enhancing the quality of life. Cities with thriving cultural and creative arts sectors are therefore considered as key to achieving the "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" called for by the 'Europe 2020' strategy. Building on the recent adoption of the new UNESCO Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape by the General Conference of UNESCO at its last session (October-November 2011), this session will explore the issues of how to preserve the ecological balance and social identity of urban communities, embedded in natural, cultural and intangible heritage, while at the same time fostering cities as the vanguard of creativity and technology, to increase their productivity and resilience, and thereby improving welfare and quality of life for citizens. In this context, this session will discuss the role of urban policies and planning in enhancing culture and creativity, and the promotion of “creative cities” in South-Eastern Europe. Experts and policy makers from the region will share views on issues such as: how to make culture and cultural industries a key factor for quality urban development? Are creative cities gateways to international markets? How to build local capacities in business skills and sustain cultural dynamics? Can cities think of themselves in terms of “creative evolution”?

Session 3 – Art and innovation: new media arts in South-East Europe

This panel discussion will focus on media arts as platforms for the creation of new content, cultural practices, social and political discourse. This field of art operates within a broad spectrum ranging from digital and computer art, through web art, net.art and installations, to computer games and modes. It opens up innovative models of communication, cooperation, and collaborative modes of production and distribution. It also invents new models of using artistic creations, which inevitably follows the transformation of the role of cultural institutions. Allowing for an ever greater interaction between the artistic creation and its audience, media art brings the public closer to the creative process and to the related exhibition spaces and facilitates interaction between the arts, science and research, industries and markets, the people and their everyday life. Building new relations with cultural organizations, media institutions and online platforms to enhance collection, public access and dissemination; creating a network community; developing an economically viable media and creative industry: such topics will be discussed during the panel, with the contribution of artists, curators, and other practitioners in this field from South-East Europe.

Logistical information

Working language

Working language will be English and Bulgarian. Interpretation English/Bulgarian will be provided.

Venue of the Forum

The Army Club
7 “Tsar Osvoboditel” Blvd., Sofia

Travel and Accommodation:

Travel (inclusive of air ticket, local transfers) and accommodation (board, lodging) expenses will be covered by the organizers. All logistical arrangements will be coordinated directly by the Sofia Film Festival Art Fest Agency:

Travel: Iliana Oblakova: sofiameetings@sofiaiff.com

Accommodation: Maya Mitreva, Velimira Kalaramova: guest@sofiaiff.com

Participants will be accommodated at the **Sofia Grand Hotel:**

1, Gurko Str., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

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PROGRAMME

Friday 16 March 2012

Arrival of participants, and transfer from Airport to the Grand Hotel Sofia

20h15: departure from Hotel (transfer by minibus)

20h30: "Sofia Meetings" dinner. Venue: Matti'D club, National Palace of Culture

Saturday 17 March 2012

Venue of the UNESCO Forum: The Army Club

7 "Tsar Osvoboditel" Blvd., Sofia

MORNING

8h45: Departure from Grand Hotel Sofia to Army Club (10 mn walk)

9h00: Registration

09h30 -10h15: Opening session (tbc)

Welcoming by Mr Stefan Kitanov, Director, Sofia International Film Festival

Opening Addresses by

- Ms Jordanka Fandakova, Mayor of Sofia
- Mr Vezhdi Rashidov, Minister of Culture of Bulgaria
- Mr Francesco Bandarin, Assistant-Director General for Culture, UNESCO

[10h15-10h45: Press conference, tbc]

10h15 -12h00:

Round-table 1 – Putting a country on the international film map: experiences from South-East Europe

- Kamen Kalev, film director (Bulgaria)
- Amra Bakšić Čamo, Head of CinéLink, Sarajevo Film Festival (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Catalin Mitulescu, film director (Romania)
- Giurgiu Tudor, director of Cluj Transilvania International Film Festival (Romania)
- Mr. Ahmet Boyacioğlu, Head of Ankara Cinema Association (Turkey)

Moderator: Stefan Kitanov, director of Sofia International Film Festival (Bulgaria)

12h00 -12h30:

Discussion with the public

12h30 -14h00:

Lunch/Bufferet

AFTERNOON

14h00 - 15h30:

Round-table 2 – New urban spaces and creativity: fostering creative cities for development in South-East Europe

- Assen Assenov, Editor of Edno Magazine, producer of Sofia Architecture/Fashion/Design Week (Bulgaria)
- Beqo Rubin, Director, Tirana Ekspres (Albania)
- Peter Miladinov, Policy Officer, Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission
- Ivan Ivković, Vice-president of Platforma 9,81 (Croatia)

Moderator: Davor Buinjac, Director for the Agency for Creative Industries, Ljubljana (Slovenia)

15h30 – 16h00:

Discussion with the public

16h00 - 17h30:

Round-table 3: Art and innovation: developing new media arts in South-East Europe

- Margarita Dorovska, Curator, InterSpace Association (Bulgaria)
- Barbara Borčić, Director, Center for Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana (Slovenia)
- Zoran Pantelić, Director, New Media Center_kuda.org, Novi Sad (Serbia)

- Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Lecturer in Theatre and Performance, School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull (Greece)

Moderator: Suzana Milevska, Lecturer in Art History and Theory, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"- Skopje (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

17h30 - 18h00: Discussion with the public

18h00 - 18h30: Conclusions of the Forum

- Francesco Bandarin, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture
- Claudia Zanfi, Director, aMAZElab "Art and Cultures", Milano (Italy)
- Representative Sofia Municipality/Ministry of Culture (tbc)

18h30 Transfer by minibus to National Palace of Culture

EVENING

19h00 Sofia International Film Awards Official Ceremony, National Palace of Culture, Main Hall

20h00 Transfer by minibus to Army Club

20h30 Sofia Meetings Closing dinner, followed by Sofia party, the Army Club