

ECA ANNUAL CONFERENCE | 2009

Valetta – Malta | 30th October – 1st November 2009

EXPERIENCING THE ARTS

Artists' Contribution to Creative Thinking and European Innovation

INITIAL REPORT

The ECA conference, Experiencing the Arts | artists' contribution to creative thinking and European innovation, held in Malta concluded on Sunday 1st November 2009. Over two days of presentations and debates, a number of speakers highlighted the fact that competencies and qualifications requested by innovative enterprises and sectors correspond to those used by artists in their processes for creation or performance.

Edward de Bono explained the principles of lateral thinking and showed how non-linear processes may lead to valid solutions on problems in the different sectors of the society.

Philippe Kern, KEA Europe Affairs, discussed the findings of the KEA study "*The Impact of Culture to Creativity*" with the audience, the majority of them artists. The study recommends, among other things, that policy makers make art and culture-based activities an integral element of their educational and learning strategies.

Edward Scicluna, newly elected MEP, Malta, and vice chairman of the Monetary Committee, spoke on the artists' contribution to the European economy and underlined the need to stimulate creativity in basic education, as a measure to achieve the Lisbon strategy in a long-term perspective.

Ion Caramitru, actor and director of the National Theatre in Romania, gave a personal account on how, through theatre, artists can play a role in the transformation of societies, to a great extent illustrated in his country.

Danish composer **Pia Raug** called for the inclusion of artists' rights in the curricula of tertiary level education institutions and discussed how artists can play a role in political processes.

Maria Badia i Cutchet MEP, Spain, presented her report "*Artistic Studies in the European Union*", which was approved by the European Parliament earlier this year, and proposed co-ordination of efforts in order to strengthen arts education at all levels.

Cecilia Keaveney, Senator, Ireland and member of the Council of Europe's Committee for Culture, Science and Education, presented this committee's report on

Cultural Education: the promotion of cultural knowledge, creativity and intercultural understanding through education, concluding that, "Cultural and artistic means of education should become an essential part of formal education, in particular at school level."

Examples of good practice were presented by Danish authors **Ida-Marie Rendtorff** and **Daniel Zimakoff**, who have met their readers in primary schools and encouraged them to write their own stories as a part of the Danish *Programme for children and young people meeting artists*, and by ECA president **Michael Burke** on how the teaching of violin at St. Agnes' Primary School in Crumlin, Dublin is changing a whole community.

It was therefore rather paradoxical that the conference participants, approximately 60 artists and artists' representatives from 20 European countries could report, that arts' education at primary and secondary level has been reduced in many countries, and that arts-in-school programmes are being cut.

The conference was moderated by Austrian author **Ludwig Laher**, and arranged in co-operation with ECA Malta and Zararti Cultural Foundation, with support from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Air Malta, Grand Hotel Excelsior and the Strickland Foundation.

On Monday 2nd November 2009, the proposed cuts were discussed by the General Assembly of the European Council of Artists - an umbrella for artists' councils and organisations from 26 European countries. The ECA General Assembly decided to appeal to the national governments to take into account the recommendations by researchers and political institutions to promote artistic and cultural education as an asset for the European societies of the future and, in so doing, reconsider any decision to cut or reduce the funding of Arts-in-Schools Programmes.



ECA's 2009 conference was organised in co-operation with ECA Malta with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture & Youth | Malta
Air Malta and the Grand Hotel Excelsior
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